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THE MANCHESTER STAGE

1880-1900

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Manchester Guardian

The Manchester Stage

1880-1900

CRITICISMS REPRINTED
FROM
"THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN"

POL. *My Lord, I will use them after their desert.*
HAM. *'Ods bodykins, man, much better.*

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PREFACE

"ORGANIZE the theatre!" Thus, many years ago, wrote Matthew Arnold, vainly enough if we look to the practical results, not vainly if we look to the wisdom of the words. London has never organized the theatre; how then should a provincial city, even a city like Manchester, do so? The kind of organization present in the old stock companies is gone. It was imperfect, but there it was; and though the revivals of Mr. Benson are a step in the right path, being exhibitions of fine art guaranteed in some measure by local enthusiasm, yet they are not enough. They are not enough; they do not restore the regular stage. "We may prophesy," wrote Theobald in 1726, "one Time or another, that the *Rust* of *Pantomimes* will be a *Salve* for the Recovery of *Dramatic Poetry*." But this end is not yet. We are assured that our theatres cannot live without

the long, close pantomime season. The pantomimes are meaningless and inartistic as a whole, though they often enlist some capital comic and decorative talent; and what a lovely thing a real pantomime could be! It is not a good state of things, and the root of it lies partly in the imperfect taste and education of the people, partly in the drawback that the more careful public, the public that really cares for the high drama, is, like the theatre itself, disorganized. It includes many cultured foreigners who live amongst us, and who are to be seen at all the best performances. But there is little means—while there has long been a means in music—of bringing such voices powerfully to bear. The theatre speaks far more widely than painting, and only less widely than music.

Nevertheless, Manchester has had the opportunity of seeing and judging much of the best that the theatre can give. There is no regular local company; but during the last twenty years almost every player of general note — except Signora Duse, for whom we are still

hoping—has been a visitor. Besides those who are very famous, we have seen many true and fine craftsmen, comic and tragic. Every year there is good acting on our stages. There is also, of course, a mass of things produced, with which civilization and art have little to do.

The press has a serious part to play in the reception of all this. It carries weight; it speaks freely and with impunity; it has it in its power to encourage, and even to guide, unknown talent, and also to be very unjust. It is the only means of immediate criticism, the only sounding-board, that exists. It ought to keep its taste fine, clear, and steady, and, subject to this condition, its sympathies generous. It has to remember that the business of the actor is to be sensitive; indeed, he is more sensitive than can be imagined by those who do not know him. The actor has to be judged, not only by what he accomplishes, but also by his artistic intention. The press critic is not worth much if he does not feel severely responsible. Writing under the conditions of daily journalism, he has to strike

his balance quickly. If he ever succeeds in praising what is excellent, and all that is excellent, he is content. Like the actor, he has great masters in his own calling, from Lessing onwards, to shame him; and he too, like the actor, however he may come short of rightness, may claim to be judged, at least in part, by his artistic intention.

This volume aims at indicating the varied excellence of the Manchester stage during the past twenty years, by a short selection of the judgments passed in the columns of the *Manchester Guardian*. It is right to add that many players and many pieces of mark are, on purpose, here left unrepresented. They were welcomed, it is to be hoped duly, at the time, but the writers do not now care to republish their articles. Such, for instance, were the revivals by Mr. Louis Calvert of "An Enemy of the People," and of the Second Part of "Henry IV." Again, there were other criticisms, especially of the Shaksperian revivals due to local enterprise, wherein the note of censure was prominent. The line was taken that a city such as Man-

chester could claim the application of the strictest standards, just as if it were London or Paris. It was felt that these revivals made some false starts; but, as one of the articles will show, they have steadily advanced in their quality. The Independent Theatre, one of the most creditable undertakings we have seen, was also due to the energy of a Manchester Committee; its productions are not neglected in the present reprint. This is an attempt not at censure but at analysis and appreciation. May it freshen the memories of those who have seen the great stage artists, and have heard their tones!

There has been some abridgment and verbal revision. The contributors are Messrs. W. T. Arnold, Oliver Elton, Allan N. Monkhouse, and C. E. Montague. Each of them is responsible for the articles that bear his initials.

Thanks are due to the proprietors of the *Manchester Guardian* for permission to reprint these reviews.

A GREEK PLAY

THE "ŒDIPUS TYRANNUS" AT OWENS COLLEGE

Last night Professor Campbell read to the members and guests of the Owens College Union his English verse translation of Sophocles' "Œdipus Tyrannus." The delivery of the play, admirably just, sonorous, and musical in every point, attained one result that not even the Comédie Française could have given more tellingly. From the first line up to the final crisis of the "recognition" there was a finely graduated and most absorbing increase in the intensity of the declamation, which then suddenly fell off from its highest strain and thenceforward dropped, as gradually as it had risen, down towards the deeper and deeper tranquillity which only reaches its greatest depth at the end of the "Œdipus Coloneus." These general rises and falls in the whole tension of a play are things which even the utmost skill in

ensemble can never effect in the acting of a large company. The balance which, according to Diderot, "is struck between the different actors so as to establish a general unity in the playing" never quite succeeds in making a whole company absolutely uniform or properly proportioned in the growth of their agitation, in the deepening of their despair, or in the progress of their comprehension of a great and terrible fact. Professor Campbell's voice seemed in this respect like the voice of the play, not of a single character, and its intensity at any one moment gauged in a remarkable way the advance of the plot, and expressed, as it were, the sum of the strain that the whole body of the play and all its persons were at the moment enduring.

When we have said that the translation heard last night was first-rate, and that its delivery was as good as a fine voice and perfect insight could make it, it remains that we should look, as vexed English playgoers, to the good that the English theatre may yet suck from this play. No doubt it is first and

foremost an Athenian tragedy, and as such it has had the fortune to be judged more often by the rules of Aristotle than by those of Diderot and Sarcey. But we are not to forget that the "Œdipus Rex" unites with "Macbeth" and "Tartuffe" to form, perhaps, the greatest trio of plays that our race has yet written, and we refuse to believe that it will long continue unknown to our repertory at a time when Paris revives it triumphantly year by year. Its great central source of pity and sympathy is grievously hard for a simple reciter to bring out in its full impressiveness and power. After the first few lines of a full dramatic representation, the spectator would have fully gripped two essential facts. The hero is to be utterly unconscious of his position till the last possible moment, and the spectator himself is to be conscious of the whole of it, from the very first moment that Sophocles can decently pour the secret into his ears. After a few lines, it is clear to all but Œdipus himself that he is to be the fulfiller of the oracle, and it is equally clear that he is to be fatally blind to

the fact. It is round this double fact in the construction of the plot that the great modern controversy on the acting value of the play has raged. Voltaire—and Corneille goes with him—runs over each of that succession of plain intimations of the truth which Sophocles gives to the audience—and which Professor Campbell drove home with all his might—and he cries out as he points to the third—"What a vilely constructed piece! Here is our play's interest ended for the third time in the first hour. There is now nothing left for the audience to learn, and they may as well go home and leave our incredibly dull friend Œdipus to find out the secret as soon as this tedious Sophocles will allow him." So they re-wrote Sophocles according to their own lights and the lights of the French classical drama, keeping the final issue in suspense for the spectator and leaving out the warnings of the coming catastrophe which Sophocles goes out of its way to place where those that run may read, and which, moreover, he thrusts before the eyes of Œdipus with the set purpose that

Œdipus may be seen to be blind to his doom.

With the later revivals, and with the surer perception of right dramatic effect, it has been pretty thoroughly established that Sophocles observed, and that Voltaire and Corneille set at nought, one of the few really sacred laws of dramatic construction—the law which forbids the dramatist to keep secrets from his audience, however many secrets he may keep from one or more of his own *dramatis personæ*. M. Lemaître, embroidering on a phrase of Diderot's, reminded French playgoers in 1888 that the audience did not come to the theatre to hold an inquest on Laius or to unearth the certificate of Œdipus's birth, but to see the effect upon Œdipus of the gradual discovery of the facts that every one else in the building already knows. Now, to realize the full theatrical effect of this terrible knowledge on one side of the footlights and of this still more terrible ignorance on the other, the first condition is that our footlights (or our *θυμέλη*) be actually there. Like every great genius who is writing a

great play, Sophocles wrote expressly for a huge theatre crammed to the doors, and for nothing less, and to realize the full intensity of this situation of Œdipus we must imagine, even more necessarily than the marble palace for which Professor Campbell appealed last night to our imaginations, on the one side the great multitude bursting with the secret, and on the other the single man who is blindly groping for it before their eyes. We might almost say that the ideal actor and the crowded house are part of the dramatist's work and an integral portion of his design, so fully does he rely on the one to express the isolation of his hero and on the other to bring out that isolation more clearly by contrast with their own "singular communion of feeling, that communion which, in a theatre where every degree of social condition and intellectual culture is represented, fuses together all hearts and spirits to form a single being, animated for several hours by the same sentiments." In the slang of dramatic criticism, the "Œdipus" is a great acting play, and it was a great achievement on the part of

Professor Campbell to suggest so finely and subtly, by a bare reading, the points where a Mounet-Sully or an Irving would make the multitude as one man by the tie of an intense pity for the unfortunate whom they watch drifting through scene after scene towards his precipice;—stupidly no doubt, if Voltaire will have it so, but with something of strength, of grandeur, of the momentum of a great force that has gone astray.

There was another point at which Professor Campbell, to our thinking, dealt very finely with a great difficulty. Critics have objected that the tragedy begins by postulating what is absurd and ends by exhibiting what is unnatural. The former objection may be dismissed. There is no reason why we should not allow a dramatist practically any postulates that he chooses to ask for, provided only that, once admitted to the drama, they be handled as dramatic art requires. But the objection to the close of the "Œdipus Tyrannus" as a detached play for English presentation is very serious indeed. Œdipus tears out his eyes

when a weak man would have killed himself and a strong man would have lived unmutilated through it all. He commits half a suicide, and is accordingly half a coward. It would have been a grander thing had he passed sooner into the tranquillity of the "Œdipus Coloneus," and not marred by this needless "self-punishment," the beautiful moral perception that Sophocles shows in the "Antigone." However it may be, this point of offence was less prominent last night than it would have been in an acted play. The reader had caught up and carried back into the "Œdipus Tyrannus" a touch of the calm of the "Œdipus Coloneus," and the jarring note in the morality of the conclusion was so softened that we could scarcely hear it.

Professor Campbell's was the perfection of a reading, but it filled us with a longing for something more. Is there no theatrical manager enterprising enough to put an adaptation of the "Œdipus Tyrannus" on the English stage? For now ten years France has made it pay richly in an unmangled form. The

Comédie Française has given the tragedy sixty times since 1881. At first it was tried tentatively, in the summer months when Paris was out of town, on the vile bodies of provincials and English tourists, who were profoundly moved. Now it has taken its regular place in the repertory of the Comédie; at a great open-air performance in Southern France on a summer night in 1888 we are told that hardened "first night" playgoers cried like children, and that a vast Provençal audience was fairly carried away with emotion, not so much by the magic of Mounet-Sully as by the absolutely universal appeal of Sophocles' pathos. Of the three great plays that we mentioned earlier it is melancholy to think that Englishmen see "Macbeth" fitfully, "Tartuffe" very seldom, the "Œdipus" never, while Frenchmen have all three brought to their own doors, and are thus supplied with a norm and standard by which to judge every other piece that they see. We are sure that if one of the great actor-managers would but take heart of grace, even the London playgoer

could be won like the Provençal. To be sure he would at first associate an adaptation from the Greek with all that is pedantic and academic, with the grim side of education, and perhaps with some stumbling amateur performance that he has sat through at Oxford or Cambridge. But no man who had once seen the "Œdipus" could fail to see that it is one of the finest of modern plays just in the same sense in which it is quite the finest play of the ancients. Its subject was almost as archaic to its first audience as to us; its emotions are not peculiarly of any age; its methods are as amenable to our own critical canons as to Aristotle's. There never was a play to which its date mattered less, and with which any particular place had less to do. Personally we rebel against that respect which dwells on the devotional feeling of a Greek audience on seeing a play like this, which brings Greek æsthetics, Greek morals, and Greek patriotism into the question, and which asks the modern playgoer to make an enormous step out of himself and to imagine the feelings of an audience

so different from himself and so vastly his superiors. What we want for our British theatre is the opposite feeling. It must be felt that the "Œdipus Tyrannus" appeals, above all, to the Greek or to the Englishman simply in his quality of discerning playgoer. The discerning playgoer is eternal, and we have no patience with those who would suppose the continuity of his instincts broken every time that a civilization falls. As he watches the "Œdipus," or "La Tosca," or "The Middleman," in Athens, or Paris, or Manchester, he is still consciously, or unconsciously, looking for concentration of subject within certain limits of space and time, for the rapid but sure march of a plot, for the harmony of many parts, the rejection of everything unessential, the proper discipline of the minor interests, the infinite "art of preparations"—in short, for poetry, passion, and the "well-constructed piece." The sum of the matter is that the "Œdipus" gives him all these in an unapproachable degree.

So that it is not so very bold a venture that we suggest. The play

is the perfect union of all the qualities for which our dramatists are striving. The experiment has been tried year after year in the country whose dramatic tastes we import wholesale, and its taste was thoroughly satisfied. The play was even found to fall naturally into our own division of acts and scenes, and it has finally taken a place in the French repertory where no play of Goethe, of Schiller, or of Calderon has made good its ground, and where Shakspere has, for 150 years, fought hard for his. It is too bad that we, a nation who cannot construct one good plot amongst us, should continue to shut our eyes to the finest tragic structure that ever was put together.

October 18, 1890. C. E. M.

SHAKSPERE

MADAME MODJESKA IN "ROMEO AND JULIET"

It is melancholy to think that the many friends whom Madame Modjeska has won in Manchester have seen her for the last time, at all events for some months—we hope not years—to come. The crowded house which greeted her on the last night of her fortnight's engagement at the Prince's Theatre testified to the impression she has made in Manchester, and she could not have parted from us under happier circumstances than were supplied by her first, and last, performance in the part of Juliet. A few words from an essay of Charles Lamb's—as essay which should be the *vade mecum* of every actor who is worthy to play Shakspere at all—will help to indicate the special quality of Madame Modjeska's performance. Lamb is arguing in an essay which is certainly unfair to the delicate and difficult art of acting, even

though it may supply a wholesome corrective to the exaggeration which would put the interpreter on a level with the creator, that the plays of Shakspere are ill-suited for performance on the stage, and that their peculiar beauties are in the main invisible before the foot-lights. He continues: "The practice of stage representation reduces everything to a controversy of elocution. Every character, from the boisterous blasphemings of Bajazet to the shrinking timidity of womanhood, must play the orator. The love dialogues of Romeo and Juliet, those silver-sweet sounds of lovers' tongues by night; the more intimate and sacred sweetness of nuptial colloquy between an Othello or a Posthumus and their married wives, all those delicacies which are so delightful in the reading, as when we read of those youthful dalliances in Paradise—

> As beseemed
> Fair couple link'd in happy nuptial league
> Alone:

by the inherent fault of stage representation, how are these things

sullied and turned from their very nature by being exposed to a large assembly; where such speeches as Imogen addresses to her lord come drawling out of the mouth of a hired actress whose courtship, though nominally addressed to the personated Posthumus, is manifestly aimed at the spectators, who are to judge of her endearments and returns of love." The passage is in some respects cruel and unjust, but, well studied, it contains the one essential lesson to be impressed on an actress who would aspire to play Juliet. The lesson is, in brief, not to bring Juliet too rudely into contact with vulgar earth; not to play her as if she were just a pretty young woman, like other pretty young women; not to exaggerate the surface seductiveness of the part, but, on the other hand, to clothe her as far as possible with those attributes of tenderness and serious sweetness which befit a character of such an ideal and poetical beauty. To attempt to play Juliet realistically, without bearing in mind in the first place and above all that the character is one of poetry, is as if one were to take the Venus

of Melos from her pedestal and seek to make her real and human by dressing her out in the last fashions of the nineteenth century. Madame Modjeska seems to us to have understood all this better than any actress we have seen in the part. In this respect she compares favourably with the best Juliet of our generation, Adelaide Neilson, who, admirable as her general conception and execution of the part undoubtedly were, still made the balcony scene to a certain extent "loathsome in its own deliciousness," for want of the simplicity and exquisite naturalness it demands. An indication of the kind of tender seriousness which Madame Modjeska tries to combine with the more obvious and seductive features of the part is to be found in her reading of the line—

Aye, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

It is generally said archly and playfully; Madame Modjeska said it with an increased shade of gravity in her tone, and eyes uplifted. We are not at all sure that her reading of this particular line is correct, but it is yet welcome as a proof that she per-

ceives that it is a mistake to turn the character all to favour and to prettiness. The endeavour to retain Juliet in the poetical atmosphere that properly belongs to her we have never seen made so seriously before, and it is rewarded by a performance of the balcony scene which is certainly the finest to be witnessed on our stage.

Madame Modjeska's foreign accent was less of an impediment to her than might fairly have been expected. If there was a single English actress who really understood the structure and beauty of blank verse, as Sarah Bernhardt, for instance, understands the Alexandrine, the attempt of Madame Modjeska might appear a little rash. It is possible to know a foreign language very well and yet be unable to feel or express the refinements of its verse as they can be felt and expressed by a native. This is particularly the case with a form of verse so extraordinarily flexible, subtle, and complex as Shakspere's blank verse. It so happens, however, that the delivery of blank verse is almost if not quite a lost art in this country, and Madame

Modjeska is not therefore called upon to struggle against formidable rivalries. The very fact of her not being an Englishwoman has compelled a certain deliberation and precision of delivery which have excellent results. It is something to hear verse delivered as if it were verse and not prose cut up into unequal lengths. The only insurmountable difficulty is in the passages requiring at once great rapidity and great clearness of articulation. It was sometimes difficult to follow the actress in the fourth act, and this was the greater pity as there were plenty of fine things in the passages not calling for exceptional haste. In this scene, as Juliet is pacing half distraught about the stage, she moves in a strange, *saccadé* way, highly characteristic of the state of tension to which her nerves have been wrought, and on one occasion in particular makes a complete turn upon herself, which is one of the most extraordinary as well as effective movements we ever remember to have seen upon the stage. The kind of delirium in which Juliet sees Tybalt hovering before her in the air was also finely

given, and without the exaggeration which often spoils the scene. The death scene we did not think so good, but its effect was partly spoilt by the arrangement of the stage, which was certainly novel, but not happy.

Mr. Forbes-Robertson is the best Romeo that has been seen in Manchester for a long time. He plays tricks with the cadence of his blank verse here and there, for instance at the end of the scene with the Apothecary, but on the whole he shows both that he is capable of appreciating Shakspere's verse, and that he is not afraid of it. His excellent voice was heard to much advantage, and his poses would have been unexceptionable if they had not now and then reminded us too forcibly of Mr. Irving. We sincerely adjure this most promising young actor to be himself, whatever he is, and no other man. A word is due to the good taste and picturesqueness of his costume, which had the merit of being correct to the period, and of blending most harmoniously with Juliet's white robes;—in such a *tableau vivant*, for instance, as is

presented by the scene of the marriage in the Friar's cell. The Friar's own lines were forcibly and eloquently delivered by Mr. A. Beaumont. Mr. Norman Forbes gave a capital rendering of the gay and gallant Mercutio. The scene with the Nurse in the first act was played with much spirit by him and Mr. G. Shelton as Benvolio. It was particularly noteworthy for the fidelity with which the actors adhered to the text at a point where it is customary to take considerable liberties with it. The duel scene was played with spirit and fire, and the actor fairly deserved the somewhat unusual compliment that was paid him of a special recall. Even the very unsatisfactory Nurse did not mar the pleasure to be derived from what must be described as an exceptionally good all-round performance of the play.

Nov. 19, 1881. W. T. A.

MR. EDWIN BOOTH IN "HAMLET"

LAST night Mr. Booth appeared at the Prince's Theatre in the part in which he first made his bow to a Manchester audience on the 12th of November, 1861. He was greeted most heartily, and the audience were rewarded by a performance of rare distinction and accomplishment, of that kind of distinction and accomplishment which naturally led those few fortunate playgoers in the house who had seen Macready, to go back to that most finely trained of English tragedians for a parallel. Readers of Charles Lamb will remember how that prince of critics protested that of all plays in the world "Hamlet" was the most unfit to be acted, and that the "shy, retiring Hamlet" himself was of all conceivable characters most unsuited to unpack his heart before an audience, not wholly composed of thinkers and dreamers like himself. If we remember rightly,

Charles Lamb says in the same essay that any tolerable actor thought himself capable of acting Hamlet, and perhaps he wrote under the memory of sufferings inflicted by one of those tolerable persons. It is obvious that a commonplace actor, playing Hamlet in the traditional stage manner, and using the character mainly as a pedestal for displays of elocution and of what too commonly passes for emotion on the stage, might be an offence even to less fastidious persons than Charles Lamb. But if an actor either is, or gives his audience the impression of being, profoundly preoccupied with his part, if he avoids with strict care that recourse to mere sound and fury which so often gains an actor his loudest plaudits, if, like Byron's hero, he contrives to seem alone amid a multitude—and if, in one word, the *ars celare artem* is perfectly attained, then surely his ambitious choice of the part is justified by the result, and the actor adds something to the mental furniture of even those who know their Shakspere best. Such a work of art is the Hamlet of Mr. Booth. If any-

thing, it errs here and there by an excess of severe simplicity and stern repression of anything like rant or bombast. In the scene with Laertes over the grave, for instance, Hamlet is meant to rant—Shakspere has made that clear enough—and, as Mr. Booth will not rant, he is here just a trifle tame. But this is, indeed, a small matter to put against the mingled refinement and virile strength of the whole performance, which left on the mind such a picture of the knightly gentleman, scholar, and dreamer whom Shakspere drew, as has hardly been seen by our generation. In the first place Mr. Booth conveys, and conveys to our minds perfectly, the intellectual superiority of Hamlet. He is a philosopher amid a mob of fools, whose folly leaves him half impatient, half amused. Nothing could have been more perfect than all his dealings with Polonius, the "Buz, Buz," and the slight wave of the hand which accompanies it, and not less admirable the way in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are set, not without a touch of deserved asperity, in their proper places. It

was a great pleasure, too, to watch and hear Mr. Booth in Hamlet's brief counsels to the players, the well-bred unassuming air, as of one at once a man of the world and a scholar, with which he uttered words of minted wisdom as if they had been the stalest and most platitudinous of commonplaces. Hamlet makes no parade, and Mr. Booth will make none either. In making it clear to the audience where the madness of Hamlet was merely fictitious, an "antic disposition" deliberately put on, and where the brain does really come dangerously near to being unhinged, the intellectual subtlety of the actor was not less admirable. At Polonius he is always laughing in his sleeve, though with that bitter, moody laughter that does not refresh; in the great scene with Ophelia he is almost distraught himself, and he is still more dangerously near the border line at the end of the play scene, after the disappearance of the King. Those humorous touches in the character which made Gervinus say that "on a higher scale Hamlet is one of Shakspere's humorous characters, suddenly in-

fluenced by the solemn demands of the realities of life," were not less subtly given. The scenes with Polonius, that with Osric, and that with the grave-digger will recur to every one who witnessed the performance. The humour was, naturally, always of that semi-serious and sinister sort which the French think peculiarly English; in the scene with the grave-digger it was positively *macabre*; but wherever Shakspere has woven these subtle threads into the texture of his work, Mr. Booth made us feel that they were there. But we are attempting an impossible thing to analyse in detail a performance which needs to be witnessed many times before it can be perfectly appreciated and understood. We will only content ourselves with adding that the grace and appropriateness of the actor's gesture and by-play contributed greatly, particularly in the first scene with the ghost and in the play-scene, to the building up of the total impression the actor desired to convey, and that where, as in the scene with the Queen or that with the ghost, it was necessary for the actor to stir his hearers profoundly,

and with a sense of almost physical fear and horror, he never failed to do so. From first to last the performance was a work of art such as has been only too rarely witnessed on our stage.

Miss Bella Pateman made a much better Ophelia than her first appearance promised. The dress was badly managed, and the high-heeled boots intolerable. These little things jarred, and the actress increased the unfavourable impression by seeming to address the audience more than once, and not to be absorbed as she should have been in her part. But she got better and better as she went on, and in the mad scenes was admirable. Her exit from the stage after the second of these was a piece of very telling and even original work, which was rewarded by a spontaneous outburst of applause. Next we should be inclined to put the First Gravedigger, as played, and uncommonly well played, by Mr. Robert Pateman. No doubt the part of the First Gravedigger is one of those which do much to play themselves, but Mr. Pateman did far more for the part than is often done.

He showed a force and humour which promise well for the future. Mr. Shore's Polonius was a great deal better than his Louis XIII., and there was an air of puzzled but superior wisdom about him in his dialogues with Hamlet which was decidedly entertaining. But Mr. Shore needs ripening before he can give us an adequate Polonius. Laertes was played with spirit by Mr. H. George. Mr. H. Brooke's King was not positively bad, but we had hoped that it would be more positively good. He protracted the soliloquy unduly, and on the whole we think it clear that blank verse is not the actor's forte. He would no doubt give a much better account of himself in prose. The mounting of the piece was good, particularly in the scene with the Queen and that with the gravediggers, and as a whole the support Mr. Booth met with is perhaps as adequate as is to be expected in these days when stock companies are no more. But he must have been very differently supported on the occasion of his first visit to Manchester twenty-one years ago.

Nov. 22, 1882. W. T. A.

MR. EDWIN BOOTH IN "RICHARD III."

THE interest in Mr. Booth's performances has been steadily increasing throughout the week, and on Saturday night he was greeted by a house in which every seat was occupied, and in which even standing room was not easily to be had. It is a pity that Mr. Booth is not staying in Manchester for another week. It would be worth his while to play for a week before such audiences as that of Saturday, which he almost certainly would do; and the opportunity of seeing him twice over in some of his parts, as well as for the first time in some of those in which he has not yet appeared in Manchester, would be very welcome to the discerning playgoer. There are still some open questions as to the range and depth of his talent, and the performance of "Richard III.," though on many points it confirmed the

most favourable possible judgment of the actor's powers, left others still unsettled. Has Mr. Booth, for instance, what the French call the "gift of tears"? Can he stir the heart with pity? He showed in "Hamlet" that he knows how to make the "seated heart knock at the ribs," and of the expression of scorn, irony, and hatred he has shown himself more than once to be a consummate master. He can be a humorist too, of the more intellectual, commanding sort, and in all the technical business of his art he has not his superior. But, with all these great qualities, is there a want of the divinest, most incommunicable gift of all? This is a question which would have settled itself if we had been given the opportunity of seeing him in "Lear." As it is, Mr. Booth leaves Manchester with the curiosity of his admirers half unsatisfied. They cannot yet feel that they fully know him. In the scene of the dream in "Richard III." Mr. Booth had perhaps the opportunity of "purifying the passions," in Aristotelian phrase, by pity as well as by fear.

> There is no creature loves me;
> And if I die, no soul shall pity me.

Take these lines in their context, and it will be seen that they give the opportunity. But Mr. Booth, who was disappointing in this scene, somehow failed to seize it. Nor was this the only point in which he seemed below himself both in this and in the final scene. Probably the actor was a little wearied and overdone by the labours of the week. But his art seemed at fault, the scenes were rather violently than impressively played, and the guiding, moulding intelligence seemed to be hardly as alert and capable as usual. Taking a sporting phrase literally, Mr. Booth might have been said to "go to pieces" in these last two scenes, and the reason was, no doubt, that which brings the runner to that condition, over-fatigue. However the fact came about, the fact, to our thinking, remains, and to any one who had by some accident happened to see the actor only in those last two scenes an admirer of the true Edwin Booth would have found it difficult to justify his enthusiasm. There would have been no such difficulty if the

play had been seen in its entirety. Acting in an excellent stage version of the play which, though not identical with that prepared by Mr. Irving in 1877, yet resembles it in being unadulterated Shakspere, very different from the hodge-podge of "Henry VI." and "Richard II.," of Shakspere and Colley Cibber, which ordinarily passes for Shakspere's play, Mr. Booth gave a most accomplished and finely shaded study of the notable villain whom Shakspere drew. Charles Lamb makes rather bitter mirth of the average actor who plays Richard, and who contrives to leave upon his hearers the profound impression that the King was "very close and shrewd and devilish cunning, for you could see that by his eye." Charles Lamb demands rather more than this—that the actor should let us see something of that "rich intellect which Richard displays, his resources, his wit, his buoyant spirits, his vast knowledge and insight into character, the poetry of his part." Well, Mr. Booth would have gone far to satisfy the requirements of the critic. His wooing of the Lady Anne was quite diabolically

subtle and seductive, and went far to render an inherently incredible scene credible. The scene with the Mayor and Buckingham was also admirable. Mr. Booth retains the concluding words which Mr. Irving omitted, "Come, let us to our holy task again," and makes them the occasion for one of the most telling things in the performance. As the Mayor and citizens leave the room Richard's face suddenly changes, and he clasps Buckingham as if to embrace him, in a fit of infernal merriment; then, catching sight of the two friars, claps on the mask again with not less suddenness, and quits the stage with Shakspere's closing words. The play of facial expression here was marvellous, and the effect on the audience very great. The scene with Hastings was another notable feature of the performance. The intense, devilish dangerousness of the man was perfectly conveyed, and when he turns furiously upon Hastings's "if," and hammers that unfortunate's death-knell upon the table with a few savage strokes of the sceptre he carries, he probably gave even the most impassive specta-

tor the new sensation of a shudder. The byplay was, as always, admirable. The actor's face and manner as Queen Margaret was heaping curses on him were a study, and the accent and gesture with which he returns her curses upon herself with a single word positively sublime in their mocking indifference and contempt. As a whole the performance was one of finished and accomplished art, with plenty of rough strength and savour about it too, and would have been unexceptionable if it had not been for the closing scenes.

The company showed to better advantage in "Richard III." than it has in other plays. Miss Pateman delivered the execrations of Queen Margaret with much vigour and effect. Once she is on these high stilts she is excellent. But she has much to learn before she can play the more level passages of a play with due discernment and gradation. By a curious coincidence Mr. E. H. Brooke, who played Richmond on Saturday night, played the part at the revival of the play at the Lyceum in 1877. He gave his lines with vigour, and bore himself

royally. The part of Clarence, with the great soliloquy, and the terrible scene that follows it, was played with force and pathos by Mr. E. Price. Mr. H. George's Buckingham was above the average. Of the feminine parts that of Lady Anne was freshly and sympathetically played by Miss Ellen Meyrick, while as Duchess of York Mrs. John Billington both played better and made a far more favourable impression than she did as the Queen in "Hamlet."

Nov. 27, 1882. W. T. A.

SIGNOR SALVINI IN "OTHELLO."

THE elder Dumas used to say that he had seen Othello played by Talma, Kean, Kemble, Macready, and Joanny. "Each of these great actors," he said, "played the part in his own way. Talma played it with his art, Kean with his temperament, Kemble with his mastery of all that the traditions of the stage could do for him, Macready with his physical beauty, Joanny with his instincts. With Talma, Othello was a Moor covered with a varnish of Venetian civilization; with Kean, he was a wild beast, half-man, half-tiger; with Kemble he was a man of a ripe age, violent and uncontrollable; with Macready he was an Arab of the days of the Abencerages, chivalrous and refined; with Joanny he was—Joanny." The part is one which, during the last half-century

at least, no actor who aspired to take a place in the first rank has failed to play. The emasculate French translation of Ducis was followed by that of Vigny in the first year of the French Romantic movement, and that in its turn has been followed by the recent versions of Gramont and Aicard. This has made the play familiar not only in all French-speaking countries, but in all where the French stage has influence—and that means from end to end of the Continent. But this immense and universal interest in the play has not produced many Othellos of the first rank. The French believe that they possess such an Othello in M. Mounet-Sully; among English-speaking actors general consent would probably assign the first place, in this part, to Booth; but the only really great Othello to be seen upon the contemporary stage is beyond all question that of Tommaso Salvini. Last night's performance at the Prince's Theatre left, indeed, the strong impression that the actor stands a head and shoulders above his contemporaries. But the part of Othello suits to perfection

his natural and acquired gifts, and it may be that to witness other of his parts would have the effect of diminishing this impression of solitary and indisputable pre-eminence. It is curious that an Italian should be the best living interpreter of the great Englishman's conception; but an English audience, while cordially, though perhaps regretfully, recognising this undoubted fact, may at the same time find their consolation in the testimony thus given to the world-wide significance of Shakspere; and even take pleasure in the thought that the tongue which the Othello of real life—if he, indeed, existed—must have spoken is the tongue of the greatest Othello of the modern stage.

An actor who would worthily play Othello needs many things. He must have a fine physique. A physically insignificant Othello is inconceivable. There is the infatuation of Desdemona to be explained, the past career of soldierly achievement to be suggested. He must be able to express the whirlwind and tempest of passion without extravagance, the utmost tenderness of love without

the suspicion of uxoriousness, the transports of a man insanely jealous without loss of dignity. There is no limit to the art which an actor can throw into his expression of the inner workings of the mind in the third and fourth acts. Or rather the limit lies in himself, not in the suggestiveness of the poet, which is infinite. Above all Othello is not expressed at all, if he is expressed as what Charles Lamb called "a black man in a passion." Two great attributes of Othello are a perfect, tranquil dignity, and a melancholy infinitely sad. His soul "sets to grief" when once his faith is shaken, and amid all the fury of his passion the actor should contrive to convey "I know not what ground-tone of human agony." The actor who does not convey these higher elements of spiritual beauty in the character does not convey Shakspere's Othello. Tried by these tests Salvini's Othello stands sovereignly high. Nothing can be nobler than his manner to Brabantio. One who has heard Salvini knows how the "Put up your bright swords, lest the dew should rust them," should be said,

and has gained the true conception of the way to play the scene in which Othello breaks in upon Cassio's drunken brawl. These are scenes which must be played in the grand style or not at all, and Salvini is a master of the grand style. He is also the most pity-stirring, the most tragic of Othellos. Dumas used to say that "Shakspere discovered at the end of the sixteenth century that muse unknown to the ancients, whose name is Melancholy." To most people Salvini's utterance of the lines ending with "Othello's occupation's gone," or that other passage where Othello groans out that his heart is turned to stone, will come like a re-discovery of that muse.

The deeper lines of the character having thus been truly drawn, the rest, for an actor of Salvini's voice and general power, is comparatively easy. The scene in which he turns upon Iago was magnificently formidable; the murder scene was terrible, but not horrible. Every actor of the part kills himself in a different way. Salvini cuts his throat with a short scimitar or hooked dagger, and the

verisimilitude of the proceeding is appalling. But we should be inclined to give the palm to that scene between him, Emilia, and Desdemona —the greatest masterpiece of unflinching realism in the literature of the world—where the actor had to express in all their crudity the utmost transports of scorn and hatred, and expressed them with a fierce reality, which yet, like Shakspere's words, was just kept within the bounds of art. An actor who can show himself thus equally capable of the utmost delicacy of ideal treatment and the utmost roughness of an uncompromising realism, deserves to be called great.

The support given to Signor Salvini was by no means contemptible. The Iago of Signor V. Udina struck us as excellent, full of vigour and discrimination; and there were good points in the Desdemona of Signora Cattaneo, as well as shortcomings. The enunciation of all the performers was clear and good, and it is noticeable how little these Italian actors seemed to attend to the audience, and how intent they seemed on the business of the play.

The pleasure to be derived from the central performance in "Othello" is not marred by any flagrant inferiority in its setting.

April 22, 1884. W. T. A.

SIGNOR SALVINI IN "HAMLET."

It may be taken for granted that of all Shakspere's personages Hamlet is the one into which a southern temperament finds it most difficult to enter. It gives little scope for obvious, passionate emotion; it is mysterious, enigmatic, obscure. Between it and any character of ancient drama there is the difference that there is between a Gothic cathedral, immense, elaborate, and inveterately convolved, and the Parthenon. The whole history of the Italian mind would seem to show that in many vital respects the modern Italians are ancients still, and have a natural sympathy and understanding for the simpler forms of classic art. If this is so, the effort which an Italian actor must make in order to think himself out of the simpler, more luminous world of thought and feeling, which is natural to him, into this brooding northern world, cannot but be great. It is

like Phidias seeking to rival the subtle strangeness, the weird suggestiveness of Michael Angelo. He may be and is a greater artist within the world common to both, but he seeks to enter into a world unfamiliar to him and fight the battle there. It is true that Shakspere's dramas are for all times and all nations. But nevertheless some of them appeal more strongly than others to that human nature which is absolutely universal, and bear translation into foreign tongues more readily than others. "Othello" or "Romeo and Juliet" can be played in any language without great loss to their effect. But when a character has to be created by a multitude of minute touches, like that of "Hamlet," and even so remains in part a mystery, then the diffuse inaccurate translation, fitting ill and loosely to the thought, makes of itself an enormous difference. That the translation is inaccurate may be gathered, for instance, from the rendering of, "Oh, my Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers," by "Ofelia! il mio dolor con questi carmi S'accresce"; and it inevitably misses, time after time, the

full force and savour of the unmanageable original. We think, then, that Signor Salvini plays "Hamlet" under difficult, even adverse, conditions. Any stage representation of the play, even in English, necessarily simplifies it to a great extent. A certain amount of its subtlety, of its cross-lights of meaning, has to be given up. A still larger proportion has to be given up when the original form, which seems indissolubly connected with the matter, has disappeared. Signor Salvini's Hamlet was undoubtedly fine art; it was nobly and harmoniously conceived, executed to perfection; but it had its limitations. In this part the actor did not eclipse the memory of Booth. The graveyard scene was surprisingly ineffective for an actor who is master of such a style. Here an English actor has undeniably the advantage. It is far easier for him to enter into the strange humour of the scene, and, while maintaining the comic turn of phrase, to suggest that element of the sinister, the *macabre*, which in the French view is the typical characteristic of the greatest English humour. There

was no such failure to reach the best attainable in the passages where the main thing is to convey the intellectual superiority of Hamlet, and his undercurrent of ironical intention. The scenes with Polonius and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were admirably played. There was much fine and subtle work, too, in the scenes with Ophelia. It is one of the many minor puzzles of the play whether Hamlet's words—"Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered"—are meant to be uttered seriously or no. Signor Salvini so utters them, without irony. But the actor takes care to convey that if he is taken in for the moment by "the show of such an exercise," he is not taken in for long. As Ophelia is returning him his presents, he catches sight of the King furtively watching at the back of the stage, and, suddenly seeming to divine something he had not hitherto comprehended, he strides away from Ophelia for a moment and clasps his hands together with the triumphant air of a man who has solved a riddle, then turning to her again, asks her suddenly, "Onesta sei?" This method

of rendering the passage is both new and extremely interesting.

The play scene was extremely fine. The actor seized the tremendous opportunity he was given, and sent a thrill through his hearers as he turned fiercely and suddenly upon the King. The fantastic, almost maniacal, extravagance of Hamlet was here perfectly conveyed. The duel scene was skilfully and gallantly carried through, and that very difficult piece of "business," the exchange of swords, was managed with a felicity which we have not seen equalled. The great scene with Ophelia was instinct with pathos and poetry, and the repeated "al chiostro," rather sighed than spoken, had a moving and beautiful effect. Needless to say that the diction was faultless, the carriage of the actor noble, and his by-play rich in all manner of fine suggestion. In fact, taken for granted the process of simplification—as we have perhaps shown, inevitable—which the character of Hamlet had undergone, it was a most admirable and memorable performance. Great art has been declared to be "classical and

romantic in one luminous whole." Signor Salvini's performance had all the merits of style which we associate with the word "classical"; it perhaps lacked something of the strangeness, subtlety, and warmth of colour which are properly associated with the word "romantic."

The Ophelia of Signora Cattaneo, the Laertes of Signor Udina, and the Horatio of Signor Fiocchi were at least average, and in our opinion better than average performances.

April 24, 1884. W. T. A.

MR. FORBES ROBERTSON IN "HAMLET."

Mr. Forbes Robertson on a former visit played Othello here for the first time. The popular reception was fervent, and the critical reception, which will have seemed frigid in comparison, was very far from adverse on the whole. He has succeeded in London with "Hamlet" and has come here with it, sure in advance of succeeding threefold with his audience. We grudge him none of the ovation and the repeated calls that he received at the Theatre Royal, because his Hamlet is about five times as good as his Othello, and is quite one of the best performances of the part latterly current. The chief reason of this felicity is that "Hamlet" calls very much less upon Mr. Robertson's deficiencies than "Othello," while it offers in several distinct ways far freer play to his graces, his pictorial aspects, his turn for high-bred farci-

cal interlude, and his happy elocutionary command over the harmonies of Shaksperean prose.

All tragedians come to play the part of Hamlet, and all of them have to adjust Shakspere's inconsistencies to their own native or acquired imperfections. We risk the word inconsistencies because the further the ordinary mind tries to dig into "Hamlet" the stronger is the impression that the poet tried to state rather than to harmonise a mass of insoluble opposites. He was dragged one way by the fine, barbaric old story; another, probably, by the lost older play on which he worked; another by theatrical needs and the opportunities of sublime melodrama; a fourth by his own questionings on life, death, and immortality, that beset him during the whole period of years when he wrote his chief tragedies. It is much if a player can abstract into some kind of congruity certain sides of Hamlet's soul. Hamlet is often demoniacal; Mr. Forbes Robertson, as an actor, has very little demon in him. He speaks the philosophical pieces in a conventional mode, without

much conviction, and they are numerous. He does not, and wisely does not, attempt to make the crazed soliloquies (after the Ghost has gone from the platform, for instance) very compatible with the controlled and humorous mimicry of madness before the Court. He inclines—and he has Goethe and the old story to back him—to emphasize the deliberation and to understate the involuntariness of Hamlet's antics. He showed signs at first (but repressed them) of using a suggestive kind of hysterical pantomime which might be thought to foreshow Hamlet's madness. For instance, in saying, "or e'er those shoes were old," he made a play of gesture which seemed to externalise the actual shoes and the person walking in them to his mind's eye. Another subtle and attentive touch (if we read it right) was to lie exhausted and supine, after the Ghost had ceased its revelations, looking up at the stars, in order fitly to cry, "O all you host of heaven."

But Mr. Forbes Robertson's general line of interpretation was clear and simple. His Hamlet is a gallant,

dignified, supple-witted gentleman, with a turn for mordant humour, a courtier, scholar, soldier, overpowered by his mission at first, but not radically infirm, and indeed on the whole and at the last, though delayed in his purpose, a master rather than a tool of circumstance. We have named Mr. Robertson's power (a power very unusual) of doing justice to the prose rhythms, which mock at criticism in no play more completely than in this. But we are far from meaning to slight his delivery of the verse. It is various and delicate; free from the sound-destroying pauses and jerks of Mr. Irving (whose tones he is gradually unlearning); best in the quieter and more limpid passages; easy, and for the most part quit of declamatory tradition. In this matter of speaking Shakspere's verse the remainder of the company cannot be said to be at all duly instructed; the Player King, Mr. James Hearn, was perhaps the best, and though he was expected to force the tones a little, was superior to most of those who were not supposed to be "playing." Miss Cecil

Cromwell did well as the Queen of Denmark, and spoke tunably. The First Gravedigger, Mr. Charles Dodsworth, and Osric (Mr. Roy Horniman) were the best of the smaller personages, and Polonius's (Mr. J. H. Barnes) emphatic foolery was pleasing, though far from subtle. The Ghost's speeches were like the clatter of something on corrugated iron. The general staging and scenery was adequate and well arranged.

If Mrs. Patrick Campbell had anticipated the criticism that she was too good as Mrs. Tanqueray to be a good Ophelia, she would have treated Ophelia much in the way that she did. We would not charge her with overplaying the innocence; but she laid very great stress on a sort of original mental fragility, almost folly, in the character, which might, of course, be justified in view of the sequel. She walked or glided in an ethereal, wavering fashion that was beautiful in itself, and increased the effect intended; but she spoke in a kind of *staccato* imitation of the Lyceum actress whose accent overpowers nearly all English contemporaries in her profession. Mrs.

Campbell's Ophelia seemed on the whole honestly studied, but slightly theoretical. The sudden, shrill, and rasping sallies of the mad scene were the only passages that stirred us or seemed to express the real talent of the actress.

May 23, 1898. O. E.

MISS WALLIS IN "MEASURE FOR MEASURE"

We think it is fifteen years since "Measure for Measure" was last acted in Manchester. It had then not been acted for seven years, and before that, again, there had been another gap of thirty years. So that about three times in half a century one can see the play on the stage, sorely as it needs acting if one is to see it in its right light and get the mind clear of the mass of idle learning that is apt to come between the eyes of readers and its text. For there is scarcely a play of Shakspere, except of course "Hamlet," which has been so set upon and worried by the whole forces of critical pedantry in their perennial search for "landmarks in Shakspere's spiritual history," conformities with Christian or other moralities, veiled references to events or actors in English history—everything, in fact, but dramatic quality in the strict sense. It comes

to life again as one sees it acted, just as does the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," another play which the learned have mauled almost to death in the study. And with this new life it gains an extreme simplicity; one ceases to think of the burden of ethical messages which criticism has tied round its neck; one thinks merely of the characteristically Shaksperean poetry of Isabella's response to the attack of Angelo and of Claudio; of the brilliant workmanship which brought in the character of Mariana to give a motive to so many actions which, in the stories on which the play is based, were as mere undramatic outcomes of animal instinct as the murder of Red Riding Hood; one thinks of the superb affluence of romantic imagination which struck off, as a mere sketch within a larger picture, the "moated grange" that has haunted poets' fancies ever since, like the famous broken-off line in "King Lear"; these things, and the amazing power of such passages as Pompey's and Barnardine's jesting with death in the grisly morning twilight, take their right places for the first time

when the play is seen as well as read, and even if the performance given of it by Miss Wallis and her company at the Comedy Theatre last night had been far less good than it was she would have deserved the warm thanks of everybody who enjoys Shakspere.

The chief charm of the play lies, of course, in the character of Isabella and, to go further, in the change wrought in her by Claudio's failure. We are to think of her at first as one of those great quiet souls who seem to make their own calm, like ships shedding oil, in the midst of tempest and trouble. Then, when the mind is penetrated with the sense of that austere serenity, we are to see the contained spirit leap up in an instant to the full height and heat of tragic passion. Shakspere never tired of this source of poetry, the exposure of fine spirits, strangers to self-abandonment, to the coarse shock of slander or brutal suggestion. In Imogen, in Hermione, in Helena, even in the shadowy little Hero he has come back to it again and again. You are to have in your garden "whole alleys," Bacon says,

of such flowers as smell sweetest when trodden upon. Shakspere has a whole gallery of such women, who rise at a bound, under some brutal blow, from gracious heroines of comedy to the full tragic stature, unpacking their hearts in magnificent words that strike one with a kind of amazement, but never with any sense of their incompatibility with the earlier calm of the speakers. If we must find fault with Miss Wallis, it is that the contrast between her voice and bearing before and after the white flame, as Pater says, has leaped into her white spirit is not so vivid as it might be. But we make haste to add that she was thoroughly absorbed, like the good actress she is, in the part, that she held the attention of her audience without a break, and that her performance was at many points deeply touching. Mr. Maurice Mancini was a very fair Angelo. The character is really a little blurred in the play, Angelo's grossly base treatment of Mariana in the past being all but irreconcilable with his mood of self-examining complacency, which is evidently intended by Shakspere to

be sincere and, in a narrow sense, justified. One need not complain if Mr. Mancini leaves indistinct what Shakspere, grafting new matter swiftly on to old, did not make quite plain. Mr. John Glendinning's Duke was not at all what the Duke has usually been taken to be. There was no touch of Jaques in his moralising on death and on human character. He was just a good-humoured, sensible person of experience; and, taking this view rightly or wrongly, Mr. Glendinning delivered his lines admirably, and, we must confess, gave us a most comfortable sense of confidence in the Duke's efficiency as providence to the play. Claudio had too hang-dog a look. He was not the "flower-like young man," clothed in the bravery of youth. Of the treatment of the text there is only one serious complaint to be made. Anything should have been left out sooner than the song sung to Mariana, which gives the finishing touch to the beauty of the whole play and helps one in an indescribable way to enter into its spirit. As beautiful as Cloten's song in "Cymbeline," it is also as perti-

nent as Ophelia's song in "Hamlet," and is certainly one of the two or three best instances in Shakspere of the skilful use of a lyric like a rightly placed jewel giving value to everything around it and taking fresh value in return.

March 18, 1899. C. E. M.

MR. F. R. BENSON IN "RICHARD II."

To the chief interest of Mr. Benson's Richard II., which he played at the Theatre Royal on Saturday afternoon, we do not think that critical justice has ever been done. An actor faulty in some other ways, but always picturesque, romantic, and inventive, with a fine sensibility to beauty in words and situations, and a voice that gives this sensibility its due, Mr. Benson brings out admirably that half of the character which criticism seems almost always to have taken pains to obscure—the capable and faithful artist in the same skin as the incapable and unfaithful King. With a quite choice and pointed infelicity, Professor Dowden, able as he is, has called Shakspere's Richard II. "an amateur in living, not an artist"; Mr. Boas, generally one of the most suggestive of recent

writers on Shakspere, has called Richard's grace of fancy "puerile" and its products "pseudo-poetic." The general judgment on the play reads as if the critics felt they would be "only encouraging" kings like this Richard if they did not assure him throughout the ages that his poetry was sad stuff at the best. "It's no excuse," one seems to hear them say, and "Serve you right, you and your poetry." It is our critical way to fall thus upon the wicked or weak man in books and leave him half-dead, after taking from him even the good side that he hath. Still it is well to see what Shakspere meant us to, and we wonder whether any one who hears Mr. Benson in this part with an open mind can doubt that Shakspere meant to draw, in Richard, not only a rake and muff on a throne and falling off it, but, in the same person, an exquisite poet; to show with one hand how kingdoms are lost and with the other how the creative imagination goes about its work; to fill the same man with the attributes of a feckless wastrel in high place and with the quite

distinct but not incompatible attributes of a typical, a consummate artist.

"But," it will be asked by persons justly tired of sloppy talk about art, "what *is* an artist; what, exactly, is it in a man that makes an artist of him?" Well, first a proneness in his mind to revel and bask in its own sense of fact; not in the use of fact—that is for the men of affairs, the Bolingbrokes; nor in the explanation of fact—that is for the men of science; but simply in his own quick and glowing apprehension of what is about him, of all that is done on the earth or goes on in the sky, of dying and being born, of the sun, clouds, and storms, of great deeds and failures, the changes of the seasons, and the strange events of men's lives. To mix with the day's diet of sights and sounds the man of this type seems to bring a wine of his own that lights a fire in his blood as he sits at the meal. What the finest minds of other types eschew he does, and takes pains to do. To shun the dry light, to drench all he sees with himself, his own tempera-

ment, the humours of his own moods—this is not his dread but his wish, as well as his bent. "The eye sees what the eye brings the means of seeing." "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees." "You shall see the world in a grain of sand And heaven in a wild flower." This heightened and delighted personal sense of fact, a knack of seeing visions at the instance of seen things, is the basis of art.

Only the basis, though. For that art may come a man must add to it a veritable passion for arresting and defining in words, or lines and colours, or notes of music, not each or any thing that he sees, nor anybody else's sense of that thing, nor yet the greatest common measure of many trained or untrained minds' senses of it, but his own unique sense of it, the precise quality and degree of emotion that the spectacle of it breeds in him and nobody else, the net result of its contact with whatever in his own temperament he has not in common with other men. That is the truth of art, to be true less to facts without you than to yourself as stirred by facts.

And truth it must be with a vengeance. To find a glove fit of words for your sense of "the glory and the freshness of a dream," to model the very form and pressure of an inward vision to the millionth of a hair's breadth—the vocabulary of mensuration ludicrously fails to describe those infinitesimal niceties of adjustment between the inward feeling and the means of its presentment. But indeed it is only half true to speak as if feeling and its expression were separable at all. In a sense the former implies the latter. The simplest feeling is itself changed by issuing in a cry. Attaining a kind of completeness, given, as it were, its rights, it is not the same feeling after the cry that it was before. It has become not merely feeling interpreted by something outside it and separable from it, but fuller feeling, a feeling with more in it, feeling pushed one stage further in definiteness and intensity, an arch of feeling crowned at last. So, too, all artistic expression, if one thinks the matter out, is seen to be not merely a transcribing of the artist's sense of fact but a perfecting

of that sense itself; and the experience which never attains expression, the experience which is loosely said to be unexpressed, is really an unfinished, imperfect experience and one which, in the mind of an artist, passionately craves for its own completion through adequate expression. "There are no beautiful thoughts," a fastidious artist has said, "without beautiful forms." The perfect expression *is* the completed emotion. So the artist is incessantly preoccupied in leading his sense of fact up to the point at which it achieves not merely expression but its own completion in the one word, phrase, line, stanza that can make it, simply as a feeling of his own, all that it has in it to be. He may be said to write or paint because there is a point beyond which the joy of tasting the world about him cannot go unless he does so; and his life passes in a series of moments at which thought and expression, the sense of fact and the consummate presentation of that sense, rush together like Blake's "soul and body reunited," to be indistinguishably fused together in

a whole in which, alone, each can attain its own perfection.

We have drawn out this tedious description of the typical artist because the further it goes the more close a description does it become of the Richard whom Mr. Benson shows us in the last three acts. In him every other feeling is mastered, except at a few passing moments, by a passion of interest in the exercise of his gift of exquisite responsiveness to the appeal made to his artistic sensibility by whatever life throws for the moment in his way. Lamb said it was worth while to have been cheated of the legacy so as not to miss "the idea of" the rogue who did it. That, on a little scale, is the kind of æsthetic disinterestedness which in Shakspere's Richard, rightly presented by Mr. Benson, passes all bounds. The "idea of" a king's fall, the "idea of" a wife and husband torn apart, the "idea of" a very crucifixion of indignities—as each new idea comes he revels in his own warmed and lighted apprehension of it as freely as in his apprehension of the majesty and mystery of the idea of a king-

ship by divine right. He runs out to meet the thought of a lower fall or a new shame as a man might go to his door to see a sunset or a storm. It has been called the aim of artistic culture to witness things with appropriate emotions. That is this Richard's aim. Good news or bad news, the first thing with him is to put himself in the right vein for getting the fullest and most poignant sense of its contents. Is ruin the word—his mind runs to steep itself in relevant pathos with which in turn to saturate the object put before it; he will "talk of graves and epitaphs," "talk of wills," "tell sad stories of the death of kings." Once in the vein, he rejoices like a good artist who has caught the spirit of his subject. The very sense of the loss of hope becomes "that sweet way I was in to despair." To his wife at their last meeting he bequeaths, as one imaginative writer might bequeath to another some treasure of possibilities of tragic effect, "the lamentable tale of me."

To this intoxicating sense of the beauty or poignancy of what is next him he joins the true passion of

concern for its perfect expression. At the height of that preoccupation enmities, fears, mortifications, the very presence of onlookers are as if they were not. At the climax of the agony of the abdication scene Shakspere, with a magnificent boldness of truth, makes the artist's mind, in travail with the lovely poetical figure of the mirror, snatch at the possibility of help at the birth of the beautiful thing, even from the bitterest enemy,—

> "say that again;
> The shadow of my sorrow; ha, let's see."

And nothing in Mr. Benson's performance was finer than the king's air, during the mirror soliloquy, as of a man going about his mind's engrossing business in a solitude of its own making. He gave their full value, again, to all those passages, so enigmatic, if not ludicrous, to strictly prosaic minds, in which Richard's craving for finished expression issues in a joining of words with figurative action to point and eke them out; as where he gives away the crown in the simile of the well, inviting his enemy, with the

same artistic neutrality as in the passage of the mirror, to collaborate manually in an effort to give perfect expression to the situation. With Aumerle Richard is full of these little symbolic inventions, turning them over lovingly as a writer fondles a phrase that tells. "Would not this ill do well," he says of one of them, like a poet showing a threnody to a friend.

There was just one point—perhaps it was a mere slip—at which Mr. Benson seemed to us to fail. In the beginning of the scene at Pomfret what one may call the artistic heroism of this man, so craven in everything but art, reaches its climax. Ruined, weary, with death waiting in the next room, he is shown still toiling at the attainment of a perfect, because perfectly expressed, apprehension of such flat dregs as are left him of life, still following passionately on the old quest of the ideal word, the unique image, the one perfect way of saying the one thing.

"I cannot do it; yet I'll hammer it out."

Everybody knows that cry of the

artist wrestling with the angel in the dark for the word it will not give, of Balzac "plying the pick for dear life, like an entombed miner," of our own Stevenson, of Flaubert "sick, irritated, the prey a thousand times a day of cruel pain," but "continuing my labour like a true working man, who, with sleeves turned up, in the sweat of his brow, beats away at his anvil, whether it rain or blow, hail or thunder." That "yet I'll hammer it out" is the gem of the whole passage, yet on Saturday Mr. Benson, by some strange mischance, left the words clean out. He made amends with a beautiful little piece of insight at the close, where, after the lines

> "Mount, mount, my soul! Thy seat is up on high,
> Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die,"

uttered much as any other man might utter them under the first shock of the imminence of death, he half rises from the ground with a brightened face and repeats the two last words with a sudden return of animation and interest, the eager spirit leaping up, with a last flicker

before it goes quite out, to seize on this new "idea of" the death of the body. Greater love of art could no man have than this, and, if we understood him rightly, it was a brilliant thought of Mr. Benson's to end on such a note. But indeed the whole performance, but for the slip we have mentioned, was brilliant in its equal grasp of the two sides of the character, the one which everybody sees well enough and the one which nearly everybody seems to shun seeing, and in the value which it rendered to the almost continuous flow of genuine and magnificent poetry from Richard, to the descant on mortality in kings, for instance, and the exquisite greeting to English soil and the gorgeous rhetoric of the speeches on divine right in kings. Of Mr. Benson's achievements as an actor, his Richard II. strikes us as decidedly the most memorable.

December 4, 1899. C. E. M.

MR. IRVING AND MISS TERRY IN THE "MERCHANT OF VENICE."

MANCHESTER playgoers are certainly highly favoured just now. Madame Modjeska has only left us to make room for Mr. Henry Irving, Miss Ellen Terry, and the whole Lyceum company. Mr. Irving is this time travelling in state. The appointments and the greater part of the scenery of the Lyceum accompany him wherever he goes, and the performances which will be given at the Prince's Theatre during the present week will be to all intents and purposes identical with those by which Mr. Irving has made the Lyceum the most popular of London theatres. If we cannot have our own stock companies—which is the best thing—the next best thing is to be given the opportunity of witnessing a London company entire. The Kendals were the first to show the respect due to their audi-

ences in the great towns by acting before them with the same company as that which was wont to support them in London, and to this part of their immense success was undoubtedly due. Mr. Irving has followed in the same track, and it shall go hard but he will better the instruction. The crowded house which greeted him last night, like the crowded houses to which Madame Modjeska played nightly during the past fortnight, prove that the public has not lost the taste for the theatre, as the pessimists are sometimes disposed to think, but is exacting as to the quality of the entertainment. Mr. Irving's present visit will set an admirable precedent. The city in which he first showed what was in him will thus have reason to be grateful to him, and we hope and think that the results of his present visit will show that in its appreciation of good and honest art Manchester is in no way behind Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Mr. Irving was well advised in making his first appearance in Manchester in the part of Shylock. There are no old controversies con-

nected with his rendering of the part, which, first given by him at the Lyceum two years ago, is new to Manchester, and the character is one admirably suited to his special gifts and capacities. A good performance of Shylock must be subtle and must be intellectual whatever else it is or is not, and in subtlety and intelligence Mr. Irving's severest critics have never pretended that he was deficient. Shylock's immense intellectual superiority is one of the chief notes of his character, and nothing could have been finer than the way in which Mr. Irving conveyed this in such test passages as those in which Shylock speaks of Antonio's "low simplicity," of "his Christian courtesy," of "the fool that lent out money gratis," or than the supreme contempt with which he treated the butterfly Gratiano in the trial scene. Apart from other obvious reasons, Shylock hates Antonio for being a fool whose folly interferes with his own serious concerns. He regards him as a man who imports a trashy sentimentalism into matters of business, and would be willing, no doubt, to call

him "good-natured," but in the contemptuous sense in which the Greeks used the word. If all this was adequately conveyed by Mr. Irving, not less excellent, as it appears to us, was Mr. Irving's general conception of the motives which sway Shylock against Antonio. Modern modes of thought have naturally influenced our view of the play, and more than one actor, both in England and in Germany, has sought to make Shylock sentimental and sympathetic as the representative and the martyr of an oppressed and down-trodden race. George Henry Lewes is said so to have conceived the part in a memorable performance of the first four acts given by him in Manchester in 1849. In Germany actors of the old school like Marr and Döring gave way to Dawison, who, himself a Jew, represented Shylock as a wholly tragic half-heroic character. This will not do. Shakspere does not paint Shylock without redeeming touches, but the notion that he intended the Jew to have the sympathies of an audience is a mere piece of modern sentimentalism.

His motives are complex. Antonio explains it all by saying:—

"He seeks my life; his reason well I know;
I oft delivered from his forfeitures
Many that have at times made moan to me;
Therefore he hates me."

It is quite natural that this should be Antonio's view, but it is neither exhaustive nor final. Shylock hates Antonio partly because he spoils trade, still more because he himself has been insulted by him, partly also because the Christian is a Jew-baiter of the first order. But the hatred has something wolfish and instinctive about it.

"So I can give no reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodg'd hate and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him."

This last word of "loathing," uttered by Mr. Irving as it were from the depths of his soul, is the right word. Shylock's hatred is not a calculating enmity for definite losses incurred through Antonio, any more than it is an impersonal and almost magnanimous desire to be revenged on the oppressor of his race. Both these elements enter into his feeling,

but it is deeper lodged than either of them. The fierce passion which shakes Shylock in the frenzied scene after he has heard of Jessica's disappearance and his utter remorselessness in the trial scene are consistent only with a personal hatred pushed almost to the verge of monomania. It is his success in rendering these which makes Mr. Irving's performance one of the truest as well as the grimmest things he has ever done.

There is not room for much display of power in the first act, and the level passages, though showing thought in every line, are still somewhat spoiled by a slowness of delivery which is in parts excessive, and a singularity of pronunciation to which even the sincerest admirers of the actor will never become fully reconciled. But the passage in which Shylock first proposes the conditions of his bond gave Mr. Irving an opportunity of which he did not fail to avail himself. The difficulty, of course, is simply to make the suggestion pass at all, to render the offer and its acceptance just conceivable. Mr. Irving pauses

some few seconds after bidding Antonio go with him to the notary, and then adds the condition in a good-humoured indifferent way as if it had just occurred to him, and as if after his proffer of a friendly loan Antonio might not unreasonably show his confidence in the lender by frank acceptance of this fantastic and facetious condition. To put the matter in very vulgar language, the Jew is playing "the confidence trick," and in Mr. Irving's hands he plays it exceedingly well. With the third act comes the great scene of denunciation to Tubal. Its peculiar difficulty is thus indicated in some remarks on Macready's performance by G. H. Lewes:—"In the great scene of the third act of the 'Merchant of Venice' Shylock has to come on in a state of intense rage and grief at the flight of his daughter. Now it is obviously a great trial for the actor 'to strike twelve at once.' He is one moment calm in the greenroom, and the next he has to appear on the stage with his whole nature in an uproar. Unless he has a very mobile temperament, quick as flame, he cannot begin this

scene at the proper state of white heat. Accordingly, we see actors in general come bawling and gesticulating, but leaving us unmoved because they are not moved themselves. Macready, it is said, used to spend some minutes behind the scenes, lashing himself into an imaginative rage by cursing *sotto voce*, and shaking violently a ladder fixed against the wall. To bystanders the effect must have been ludicrous. But to the audience the actor presented himself as one really agitated. He had worked himself up to the proper pitch of excitement which would enable him to express the rage of Shylock." Lewes adds that Madame Vestris used to tell a similar story of Liston, "whom she overheard cursing and spluttering to himself as he stood at the side scene waiting to go on in a scene of comic rage"; and he might have further quoted a similar story told of the French actor Préville, who was nearly being forcibly removed by one of the stage carpenters as he was staggering about behind the scenes with a pipe in his mouth, working himself up to go on as a

drunken man in a scene from the "Mercure Galant." We do not know whether Mr. Irving is compelled to have recourse to a similar preparation, but he certainly kindles very rapidly into flame. The scene is almost painful—there is, indeed, something animal in the Jew's entire loss of self-control, and Mr. Irving spares us no detail of the wild eyes, wolfish teeth, and foaming mouth, —but it is consummately played, and its repulsiveness is not more than is necessary to express Mr. Irving's conception of the character. We notice with some satisfaction that in this scene Mr. Irving delivers the famous words, "I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys," differently from the manner in which he delivered them at the Lyceum two years ago. He then made them grotesque, but they are said in all seriousness by Shylock, and should be so said by the actor. The danger of raising a foolish laugh at this juncture is one not to be lightly faced, and the change is nothing but good. In the fourth act Mr. Irving is seen at his best, almost entirely unmannered

and unaffected, and exceedingly powerful. His manner and way of speaking when Portia appeals to him to have a surgeon by, and he, peering through the bond as if he did not already know its contents by heart, only answers, "I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond," were beyond praise. So, too, was the terrible "Come, prepare!" when he suddenly steps forward with arm quickly bared and knife in hand. The improbability of the situation is such that it is not easy to be deeply moved by it, but Mr. Irving so plays it as to make it really formidable. The actor's bearing under his sudden reverse of fortune was not less excellent. For the first time in the play the broken, desperate man has all the sympathy on his side. It is only doubtful whether in the excellent acting version which Mr. Irving has made of the play it would not have been well to omit all reference to the last intolerable injury, that of Shylock's involuntary conversion to Christianity. An admirable critic has made some remarks on this head that are worth referring to:—"The strange notion that the

secret purpose of the play was to expose the mischiefs of religious intolerance was probably suggested by the last of the two conditions of pardon. And though I do not think that Shakspere meant it to be so taken—for I suspect that in the eyes of a Globe audience a Jew consenting to 'become a Christian' was simply an infidel seeking admission into the fold and qualifying his soul for salvation—I admit that to modern ears it sounds like a wanton insult, and (as producing on a modern audience an effect the very opposite to that which was intended) ought to be left out. Nothing would be lost by the omission, and it would be universally felt that Christianity could have no interest in enlisting such a recruit." Perhaps Mr. Irving may some day see his way to the acceptance of James Spedding's suggestion.

Miss Ellen Terry's performance of Portia is not new in Manchester, and does not call for detailed notice on the present occasion. We have already pointed out that the charge of a too great freedom and levity of manner is made by those who are

not so familiar as they might be with Shakspere's text. More reasonable fault might be found with Miss Terry's delivery of her longer speeches, above all that in which she gives herself to Bassanio. But the actress was not in good voice last night—she appeared to be suffering from a cold—and hardly played with her usual spirit. This was particularly noticeable in the first three acts. She rose to the occasion, however, in the trial scene, which was charmingly as well as strongly played. One little touch—a furtive kiss from the tips of the fingers to Bassanio when that exemplary husband refuses to give up his wife's ring—was very pretty, and, as far as we remember, novel. Mr. Terriss made a Bassanio much above the average; Mr. Child was a fair, though rather colourless, Antonio; and of the minor parts that of Launcelot Gobbo was well and humorously played by Mr. S. Johnson. The mounting of the play was all it should have been, and the groups into which the figures fell in such scenes as that of Bassanio's choice of the casket or that of the

trial may fairly be described as delicate and successful arrangements of line and colour.

Nov. 22, 1881. W. T. A.

SIR HENRY IRVING AND MISS TERRY IN THE "MERCHANT OF VENICE"

Sir Henry Irving's Shylock is one of the very finest of his accomplishments—a performance full of beauty, wrought with perfect discretion, infinitely stimulating and impressive. It stands apart from the fine things he has done on a lower level—from Robespierre, Mathias, Lesurques, and the rest. After seeing it we are ready to take the field against the famous indictment of Charles Lamb —that there is something that levels all distinctions in the nature of acting; that the pleasure we receive from Shakspere differs in no respect from that which comes to us from lesser writers; and that it is natural to speak indifferently of "The Gamester" or of "Macbeth"—to bring it nearer home we may say of Shylock or of Mathias—as fine stage performances. For our part, we contend with conviction that the effects which Sir Henry Irving produces,

with an art admirable and legitimate, in those minor plays which he has made famous are of a different and a lower kind from those which won an almost adequate meed of applause at the Theatre Royal last night. His acting is always imaginative, distinguished, nervous, adroit; from material not more than common he can evolve a fine sense of humanity. In his Shylock he does more than this. He shows us that to a great actor opportunities are not alike, that an art which is founded on the utterance of words is not indifferent to the quality of words, and that emotions primary and eternal surpass and transcend what is particular and domestic. Sir Henry Irving's Shylock is full of careful detail, but there may have been Shylocks more plausibly human; none, we think, so typical and so suggestive.

In his first scene Sir Henry Irving has an innovation, if we are not mistaken, that is curious and interesting. The passage—

"O, father Abraham, what these Christians are,
Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect
The thoughts of others!"

is spoken, not as badinage to Antonio and Bassanio, but to himself in a spirit of terrible irony. It may be taken as an example, perhaps not a very good one, of the extraordinary wealth of imaginative detail by which he builds up his effects. His constructive faculty is remarkable; his creations live by virtue of a multiplicity of skilful touches. If we may make a distinction we should surmise, if we may not venture to dogmatise, that Sir Henry Irving is not primarily an actor by temperament. He is not inspired; his conceptions are cast in no absolute mould; he has overcome difficulties. His great effects are produced, one may believe, by a mental winnowing and refining which leads, in his great moments, to an expression final and convincing. It is not by sheer force of passionate instinct that he prevails, but by a calculated art. In the scene with Salanio and Salarino, and later with Tubal, the student of acting will note the economy of his physical powers. He has that temperance which may give it smoothness even in the torrent and tempest of his passion. Of his bearing in the

trial scene it might be said that it is too implacable and relentless for one to be presently overthrown in ignoble discomfiture. But the fault here, if there be a fault, is Shakspere's. It has been boldly contended that Shylock is too great for the play into which he has been fitted, that the fervour of his creation overcame the dramatist's sense of unity. One can conceive a Shylock who would have had the Christian's blood at any cost. From such presumptuous emendations Sir Henry Irving's performance may deliver us. Shylock's brief moment of triumphant hate is not, he shows us, the characteristic note of the eternally oppressed. In tragic acquiescence he realizes again that "sufferance is the badge of all our tribe." In such a part as Shylock there is a rare and peculiar pleasure in Sir Henry Irving's delivery of his lines. It can hardly be contended that he speaks blank verse with perfect balance and rhythm. His method, perhaps, forbids it. He is over-deliberate for the full effect of sustained dramatic periods; and, again, he has a special care for detail; but lines and passages are

spoken with a full sense of their beauty, and with an enunciation of perfect purity and distinction.

Miss Terry's Portia, as usual, gained the hearty good-will of the house at once. The prose passages of her first scene with Nerissa were admirably done, and her success in this scene, which seems to offer little opportunity, was unqualified. It need not be said that in the greater parts of the play Miss Terry stirred the hearts of her auditors. In the trial scene her famous speech was beautifully spoken, and, despite of modern reactions in favour of the oppressed Shylock, the house was entirely with her. Her performance, admirable in itself, seems to us to be on a somewhat different plane from that of her fellow-artist, and something of the effect of perfect combination is missed. Her persuasive charm is hardly adequate to this towering Shylock. It is a defect inherent in the play. Here the two irrelevant stories which Shakspere attempted to combine into a single play touch one another. The trumpery bits of fun that jar on us in this scene are evidences of his

failure, a failure, we must hasten to add, that is worth many successes. Perhaps nothing impresses us more in such a performance as that of Sir Henry Irving than the power of the consummate actor to create instantaneously his own conditions, to take us at once from the various incongruities and irrelevances that surround him to the very heart of the matter. It remains to be said that Miss Terry was as charming as ever in the last act, the fun of which seems to be even wilder than before.

Mr. Laurence Irving acted the difficult part of Antonio with distinction, and the representatives of the gilded youth of Venice were sufficiently vivacious. Mr. Charles Dodsworth as Launcelot Gobbo was a great favourite with the audience, but was perhaps a little too explanatory or emphatic in his humour. But the humour of Launcelot and his father is perhaps rather primitive than eternal, and its survival is due merely to the accident that it is embedded in finer work, and that we have not yet lost the tradition of comic relief. The Bassanio of Mr. Arthur Rayston was pains-

taking, but had little of spontaneous gaiety. Miss Maud Milton was a very sprightly Nerissa. The scenery and appointments were of course adequate, and the whole performance was appreciated by a very full house.

Oct. 7, 1899. A. N. M.

"MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING" AT THE QUEEN'S THEATRE

"Much Ado About Nothing" is the fifth play of Shakspere with which Mr. Flanagan has come to the relief of playgoers at the time of year when there are no plays to be heard, nor any acting to be seen, at most of our theatres. No praise can be too great for the spirit of this enterprise, and the critic's task of saying as if on oath what he finds and what he misses in the acting of a play is seldom harder than when it seems as if a little fibbing—under the name of "sympathetic treatment"—might give such an enterprise a lift. We have spoken pretty hardly of whatever shortcomings seemed to us to mar the four earlier performances—of the First Part of "Henry IV.," "Antony and Cleopatra," "Macbeth," and the "Winter's Tale"; it is the greater pleasure to be able to say that this year's "Much Ado About Nothing" is incomparably the best of the five

There is a good Beatrice, a very fair Benedick, and a capital Dogberry. Still more to the purpose, no part is really badly played. In the "Winter's Tale" there were at least two characters whose elocution made one wince with the pain it gave the ear. The text, again, is, with one terrific exception, not much cut up or pulled about. The exception is the chopping in two of the church scene, to make room for a great *tableau* of a second church, a very cathedral, in which a Mass of Palestrina's is sung, while the play waits. We do not like it, but the managers probably know their business better than we, and as they seem to think that people will not have Shakspere without these interruptions there is nothing for it but to suffer the interruptions as gladly as one can. The scenery, as a whole, comes nearer the right mean between the rigours of the Elizabethan Stage Society and the miscalculated "realism" of the Lyceum than the scenery of most recent revivals. There is a good deal of needless solidity about Leonato's garden, where you only need something for Benedick

and Beatrice to hide themselves with, and the elaborations of the ballroom in the last act took one's mind away from the opening lines of the dialogue. But the simple painted scenes were admirable in their gentle suggestion of a world of formal gardens full of cut yew hedges with statues niched in them, fishponds and comely cypresses, rooms elaborately panelled, and houses of fine design with the sunlight playing on the stone traceries. These painted sheets, with their reticent suggestiveness, were really apt to the play; they did not distract the mind from it, but gently helped the mind to enter into the spirit of it and to get from it the special quality of pleasure which it can give.

But what is it—that special quality of pleasure in virtue of which, or of its power of yielding it, the play differs as much from, say, the "Comedy of Errors" or the "Taming of the Shrew" or the "Merry Wives of Windsor" as one of four good wines differs from the other three? The plot, with its wholly external and artificial mainspring,

Don John, is one of Shakspere's most casual makeshifts; the characters—well, people talk of Beatrice and Benedick as finely studied characters, but in fact the study does not go very far; when all is done one would be able to say but little about the characters of these two; a false outside which they have worn has been cleared away, but what remains behind might be almost anything. Again, the mere humours of the trick played on them are not distinctive of the play. It is merely the trick played on Malvolio over again. And Dogberry is purely episodic—a hit at the contemporary police which could have been forborne without affecting in the slightest the special flavour of the play, the flavour which piques the palate of one's mind almost from the first words of the first scene. Perhaps the secret is this, that here, you feel from the start, are not merely marked and taking single figures, but a "set," with ways of their own, a mode of living at which they are all skilled. With them the impulse has carried pretty far that set the men of the Stone Age chip-

ping out zigzag lines of little flakes from the flat of flint knives—the wish to add a fine second use to the common uses of things, so that a cup or a dagger may hold water, or kill, but also please the eye, and speech, too, the commonest utensil of all, not only show or hide what the speaker has in his mind, but please the ear. Of words, as of line and colour, there is an "industrial" as well as a "fine" art, and short of writing epic poems you may etch or embroider on yes and no, or the offer of food, or the giving of the lie, as well as on a paper-knife of steel or a piece of cloth for a coat. That is the preoccupation of Leonato and his family and friends. In no play that we know is the talk, while kept in prose, graced with a finer tracery of second intentions in the choice of words, more nicely enamelled with little piquancies of cordiality or irony, or laid out in more easy and gracious symmetries and antitheses of thought —take, for example, Don Pedro's "Good Signior Leonato, you are come to meet your trouble; the fashion of the world is to avoid

cost, and you encounter it," and the reply, "Never came trouble to my house in the likeness of your Grace; for, trouble being gone, comfort should remain; but when you depart from me, sorrow abides, and happiness takes his leave,"—and the whole so perfect in what painters call tone that all its bright things seem, as you go on, to melt into a mellow, diffused lustre, singularly expressive of the air of mingled vivacity and repose, alertness and reticence, spontaneity and finish, that marks social groups in which a point is made of treating more or less in the spirit of art all the little contacts of life.

To aid this effect, to help out that first pattern of delicate second intentions in the choice of words for their sense, there is worked upon almost every prose speech in the play—excepting always the Dogberry scenes—a particularly delicate pattern of sound, a tracery to be seen, as it were, with the ear. Rhythm, assonance, alliteration, all the known technical means are untiringly used to that end. And first rhythm, the grouping and spacing out of long

and short syllables, syllables accented and unaccented, so as to draw the pleased ear on and slip a certain impression, through a certain kind of pleasure, insensibly into the mind. Take a typical speech like Claudio's, "Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. Lady, as you are mine I am yours. I give away myself for you and dote upon the exchange." Technically we have here a kind of hovering on the verge of dactylic and iambic metres, only to glide on, with little breaks that do not jar, into new modes of taking the ear. Now and then the rhythm becomes bald or commonplace, or even tumbles right into metre, as in "But few of any sort, and none of name," but as a rule it is elusive and subtle in the highest degree. Of course the deepest passion cannot be so expressed; a Lear with the rhythms of Claudio would be laughable; but for aiding the expression of sensibility and gallantry rather than love, of outward distinction, urbanity. and composure rather than heroism or saintliness, there is nothing like these lightsome harmonies of prose, which seem to

fix in ideal forms the rises and falls of a finely modulated voice. Here the prose speeches had to be in prose, but they also had to contrast as vividly as possible with the gait with which most talk jolts and bumps along. Hence the marvellous variety of their rich, curious, and elegant rhythms. It is still speech the utensil, but speech expressly represented as absolutely covered with intricate ornament by experts in its decoration.

After the rhythmical design, the alliterative. In all exquisite writing there is alliteration, but here it is pre-eminently graceful and various. No doubt "A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours" is obtrusive and not very choice. But a finer type of design is seen, in a very simple form, in sentences like "I have a*lready* de*livered* him *let-ters*," in which a kind of chord of consonants, l r d, is struck in "already," repeated whole in "delivered," and again repeated in "letters," only with the hard t substituted for the soft form of the same letter. A step further in subtlety of effect is reached in Bene-

dick's "*P*rove that I ever *l*ose *m*ore *bl*ood *w*ith *l*ove than I will get again with drinking, *p*ick out *m*ine eyes *w*ith a *b*a*ll*ad *m*aker's *p*en," etc., where the speech, to this point, is cut into two balanced parts, and the elements of the consonantal framework, p, l, m, b, l, d, w, l, introduced in the first half, reappear in the second in the modified structure p, m, w, b, l, d, m, p, the recurrence of the dominant sounds being most skilfully contrived to give the ear as much as possible of the pleasure of balance, symmetry, a return swing, without the monotony of a mere pendulum. A pattern still more elaborate is spread over the equally typical speech: "*M*uch *d*eserved on his *p*art, and equally re*m*embe*r*ed *b*y *D*on *P*e*d*ro; he hath *b*orne hi*m*self *b*eyon*d* the *pr*o*m*ise of his age, *d*oing in the *f*igure o*f* a *l*amb the *f*eats o*f* a *l*ion; he hath in*d*eed *bett*er *bett*ere*d* expectation than you *m*ust expect of *m*e *t*o *t*ell you how." Here there is first thrown into relief, in the five opening words, the cluster of consonants m d p; in the second clause it recurs in the form m m b d b d p d, with its first ele-

ment, m, reduplicated singly, and its two remaining elements, p d, thrice repeated jointly, with the p modified to its softer form b in two repetitions out of the three, and returning to its original harder form in the third; in the next group, "he hath *b*orne hi*m*self *b*eyon*d* the *pro-m*ise of age," the original cluster is more broken up; this time its elements are offered to the ear in two minor groups of b m and b d p m; then the design branches off for a moment, in the words "*d*oing in the *f*igure o*f* a *l*amb," into the small subsidiary ornament of d f f l, balanced by the f t f l of "*f*eat*s* o*f* a *l*ion," the mean between monotony and formlessness being here achieved by transposing the first two letters of the group on its second appearance and varying the soft d with the harder form t. Finally, after a passage in which the d and p of the original group, with their alternative forms t and b, are played upon without the m, the whole of the original group reappears in the m t p of "*m*us*t* ex*p*ect," with a whole cascade of t's to end with. Of course one must not be taken to mean either

that Shakspere necessarily worked out these schemes consciously — euphony being a thing to which great writers are probably able to take very short cuts—or that he was at no pains to avoid cacophony when he was not writing words for the mouths of a particular kind of accomplished people. But, however attained, the result in this particular play is a unique abundance and elegance of technical accomplishment in the prose dialogue, of a kind rather difficult to analyse but extremely effective as a means of support to that first impression of a world like a beautiful formal garden, with a whole guild of decorative treaters of life sunning themselves in it and turning everything very competently "to favour and to prettiness."

That is the main impression that a performance of "Much Ado about Nothing" has to enhance if it can, or, at any rate, not to mar. And to our thinking the performance at the Queen's does in very fair measure enhance it by vivifying some scenes that cannot quite come to life off the stage. And there is, on the whole, little fault to be found

for misdeliveries of fine passages or other disenchanting failures in perception. Miss May Harvey as Beatrice did, it is true, once turn living verse into dead prose by plunging an "and" into the vitals of the line—

> "Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps,"

but in the main the delivery of the text was correct and sympathetic and the dialogue was given with a good deal of the special kind of gusto, the air of delighted preoccupation in bouts of exquisite talking for talk's sake, that the play requires. In this Miss Harvey was excellent. She caught the very spirit of the thing in the way her voice seemed to pause and hover for an instant after the first five words of the sentence "He is a very valiant trencher-man," before alighting with a little pounce on just the word she had wanted for a finishing touch. That is how acting can help. It can make the mind linger over the words and so enable their curious richness of design to tell. Of most of the prose speeches in the lighter parts

of the play one may say that the more slowly they can be given without a positive effect of slowness, that is to say the more the sentences can be spaced out from each other with by-play apt enough to the words just spoken, to keep them, as it were, still sounding in the mind's ear and escape the blank of positive silence, the nearer will the performance come to the intended effect. Miss Harvey, as a rule, did this capitally. She certainly rushed through her great soliloquy, "What fire is in mine ears?" much too fast; what ought to have been a drawn-out feast of interest in a piquant change of feeling carried out before one's eyes was over in a twinkling. But on the whole the part was, as we think, conceived in just the right way, and executed, not with any such wealth of resource as Miss Ellen Terry brings to it, but with real life, enjoyment, and variety.

Mr. H. Cooper Cliffe, whom we remember to have played Iachimo with credit at the Lyceum when Sir Henry Irving fell ill during the run of "Cymbeline," played Benedick carefully and intelligently, with no

brilliant touches—though his first start of interest when the trick in the garden began to work was good, and told at once in the house—but also with hardly any false notes, which is a high praise. While commending Mr. Cliffe's conscientiousness we should not, by the way, forget to say that Miss Harvey made one really bad mistake in adding to the rather telling piece of gag, "Kiss my hand again," used by Miss Ellen Terry towards the end of the church scene, a further piece of gag, "Kill him, kill him *dead*"—a much less felicitous piece of composition in the Beatrice manner. Mr. J. H. Atkinson in Dogberry was almost as good as could be; he slurred nothing and exaggerated nothing, and the humour, like that of the same actor's Bardolph and all the Shakspere clowning of Mr. G. R. Weir, was of just that particular quality which everybody knows when he sees it, and which in a vaguely correct way is called Shaksperean, but which nobody has yet quite succeeded in describing exactly.

There was a great deal of music, including Berlioz's "Beatrice and

Benedick" overture as well as the Palestrina Mass—in our opinion a great deal too much. When "Sigh no more, ladies," a marvel of effectiveness in its place, has been sung as pleasantly as it was by Mr. Hewson on Saturday night, we would rather trouble the "sister art" no further. But the audience was evidently of the other way of thinking. It was a very large, friendly, and deeply interested audience, and its reception of the revival promised it a success which its merits as a whole have fairly earned.

Jan. 22, 1900. C. E. M.

MR. BENSON IN "TWELFTH NIGHT"

THERE can be no doubt that "Twelfth Night" was heartily enjoyed by the audience at the Theatre Royal last night, and the performance was, all round, a meritorious and often a delightful one. Mr. Weir put us all into good humour with his Sir Toby, and Mr. Grenville, as Sir Andrew, seconded him very ably. Mr. Rodney was an agile and accomplished Fool, and Miss Robertson's Maria, a part not perhaps quite in her line, ripened as the play proceeded, and was always pleasant. These players seemed to us to strike and maintain the right note, and we could abandon ourselves to the capital fun of the drinking-scene without reservations. Mr. Weir's business with his legs and boots is as funny as anything one can wish for, and Mr. Grenville was very amusing both in this scene and later when he

assumes a martial and truculent air in preparation for the duel. It is difficult to know what to say of Mrs. Benson's Viola, for her acting in the duel was so entertaining that we must forgive her for some touches of burlesque. In the more poetical passages she failed, we think, to maintain the ideal of Viola's pensive tenderness. It is not depth but delicacy of emotion that is required in "Twelfth Night." This is no real world; passions are kindled and fade at a breath, and the actors should exclude reality from their love-making. Orsino, who was quite nicely done by Mr. Hignett, might perhaps be described as an amateur rather than as a lover, but he too, as well as Miss Brayton, who was on the whole a satisfactory and even charming Olivia, seemed a little over-earnest. The subordinate characters were in capable hands. Mr. Oscar Asche was a vigorous and competent Antonio, and Mr. Quartermaine and Mr. Fitzgerald were apt and useful in the parts of Sebastian and Fabian.

Of Mr. Benson's Malvolio we are constrained to speak with some

freedom. It is, to our mind, enormously overacted; in many respects an able piece of work, but hardly worthy of the actor's talents and reputation. If Malvolio is one of the most perfect of all Shakspere's comic characters, it is equally certain that such depth of comedy can be found only in one of some inherent seriousness, and if "Twelfth Night" is to remain on the comic plane, and not to degenerate into mere farce, the Malvolio must be careful to husband some remnants of his dignity. The scenes of his enticement and of his discomfiture lose half their value if the edifice of fantastic conceit is shaken too soon, and if "the decent sobrieties of the character" are utterly forgotten. Further, even at his most ridiculous, there must remain the possibility of better things, displayed later in that surprising touch of pathos in the dialogue with the sham Sir Topas, a salt of tragic suggestion which heightens and relieves the sense of comedy, and which may surely rank as one of the most artful strokes of Shakspere's genius. Mr. Benson makes little of this scene. We don't see

any pathos or seriousness in it, and we begin to wonder whether it should be there. On the other hand, he makes his comic points in a manner that may appeal to the dullest. Throughout we miss the accent of nature and even of a consistent convention. It is an elaborate assumption of a part, a studied piece. Of course, so fine an actor has his moments of distinction, and his appearance in the earlier scenes was admirably pictorial, but "Twelfth Night" is a classical play, and we can hardly rank this as a classical performance.

"Twelfth Night" will be repeated on Thursday and Friday evenings and on Saturday morning, and the brief season will be brought to a close on Saturday evening with Mr. Benson's fine performance of "Hamlet." We must take this opportunity of expressing a general sense of high appreciation of the services of Mr. Benson and of his company. Their visit has done something to quicken and enrich the life of our city, and if their performances have been imperfect, it is certain that they have been admirable. We can-

not live upon Shakspere alone, but the most modern and decadent among those of us who have attended the Theatre Royal during the last weeks must have received a renewed and profound impression of the wealth of life and art in these immortal plays. A happy feature of the visit has been the large attendances of young people, whose education and delightful recreation have been thus concurrently pursued. Mr. Benson seems to have won "golden opinions from all sorts of people," and he may be congratulated upon a distinct personal success, a success which is, he may believe, gratifying to those whose work it has been, in no dogmatic and positive spirit, to criticise these performances.

Dec. 8, 1898. A. N. M.

FRENCH PLAYS

MME. SARAH BERNHARDT IN "PHÈDRE"

THE audience which greeted Mme. Bernhardt in "Phèdre" last night was probably not so numerous as that which witnessed "Frou-Frou," but it was an audience worth playing to. It was only the *public d'élite* that could be expected to be very anxious to witness a French classical tragedy, and from a business point of view "Phèdre" will no doubt always be the least successful of Mme. Bernhardt's performances. There is, to speak frankly, an ineradicable prejudice against Corneille and Racine in the minds of most Englishmen. There was once an equally ineradicable prejudice entertained by Frenchmen against Shakspere. But that day is past; with educated Frenchmen Shakspere is as much an article of faith as with ourselves. The victory won by Shakspere has not, however, been won by Corneille and Racine, and

the English judgment of them is often as *saugrenu* as was the current French opinion of Milton or Shakspere a century ago. It is an honourable mission for Mme. Bernhardt to make French tragedy better known and better appreciated out of France, and her reputation would suffer if she were to neglect a part in which she shows so much new and surprising power as in that of Phèdre. Manchester playgoers would hardly have seen all the capacities of the actress if they had not seen her in the part which occupies on the French stage the sort of position that the part of Lady Macbeth does on our own. There was a fair sprinkling of men in the house who had seen Rachel, and they of course would not have been content without witnessing her successor in Rachel's greatest part. The reception awarded to Mme. Bernhardt was the best proof of her success. After the second act in particular the applause was as enthusiastic as it was well deserved.

There is an interesting passage on Racine in a recent essay of Mr. Matthew Arnold. The passage il-

lustrates, by the way, the supreme charm which Racine's verse possesses for French readers and listeners, and is worth quoting if only on that account :—"If Molière cannot make us insensible to the inherent defects of French dramatic poetry, still less can Corneille and Racine. Corneille has energy and nobility, Racine an often Virgilian sweetness and pathos. But while Molière in depth, penetrativeness, and powerful criticism of life, belongs to the same family as Sophocles and Shakspere, Corneille and Racine are quite of another order. We must not be misled by the excessive estimate of them among their own countrymen. I remember an answer of M. Sainte-Beuve, who always treated me with great kindness, and to whom I ventured to say that I could not think Lamartine a poet of very high importance. 'He was important to *us*,' answered M. Sainte-Beuve. In a far higher degree can a Frenchman say of Corneille and Racine, 'They were important to *us*.' Voltaire pronounces of them : 'These men taught our nation to think, to feel, and to express itself. *Ces hommes enseignèrent à la nation*

à penser, à sentir et à s'exprimer. They were thus the instructors and formers of a society in many respects the most civilized and consummate that the world has ever seen, and which certainly is not inclined to underrate its own advantages. How natural, then, that it should feel grateful to its formers and should extol them! 'Tell your brother Rodolphe,' writes Joseph de Maistre from Russia to his daughter at home, 'to get on with his French poets; let him have them by heart, the inimitable Racine above all; never mind whether he understands him or not. I did not understand him when my mother used to come and sit on my bed, and repeat from him, and put me to sleep with her beautiful voice to the sound of this incomparable music. I knew hundreds of lines of him before I could read, and that is why my ears, having drunk in this ambrosia betimes, have never been able to endure common stuff since.'" Mr. Arnold is here arguing against the French estimate of Racine, which, however, is not perhaps in the case of the present generation so unqualified as he seems

to think. For English readers it is necessary to state Racine's merits rather than his faults. His marvellous gift of style is indicated by Mr. Arnold's implied comparison between him and Virgil. Untrained English ears often fail to find beauty in Racine's Alexandrines, and it is indeed true that the music of Racine is not the music of Shakspere. But it is necessary to remember that the art of reading French verse rightly by no means of necessity goes along with an ordinary conversational knowledge of the language, and no one who heard Mme. Bernhardt, or even M. Train, last night could deny the sweetness of Racine's poetry. Moreover, the great tragic force and intensity of Racine's play came clearly out. The wit of man never devised a more extraordinary *tour de force* than the French classical tragedy. To take ancient subjects wholesale and present them on a modern stage to a modern audience, then to take a metre which only the perfection of art can keep from being sing-song and monotonous, and to expect poet and actor alike to express the whole gamut of passion as

easily as in our own flexible and various blank verse—this was the task imposed upon Racine. That he should move with any power in such silver fetters is a wonderful thing, that he should write a great and moving tragedy under such conditions is the triumph of mind over matter. If we remember, too, that till Lekain made the change to the Greek and Roman dress Greeks and Romans were represented in full French Court dress, wigs and all, the wonder will not be less. Racine has, it is true, borrowed freely for his tragedy. "Phèdre" is, of course, directly founded on the "Hippolytus" of Euripides, and Seneca has been freely drawn upon; but the play is nevertheless fairly and honestly his own, as much as "Julius Cæsar" is Shakspere's own despite of Plutarch. The characters are clearly drawn—we do not altogether agree with Professor Morley's criticism that "dramatists of Racine's school never have painted character with a firm hand in clear and distinct touches"—and in the part of Phèdre in particular an actress will do as much as human nature can do

if she extracts from Racine all his thought without seeking to introduce new ideas of her own. Rachel and Ristori, for instance, are often praised for the clearness with which they represent the passion of Phèdre as one beyond her volition, and Phèdre herself as cursed by the cruel goddess. But if an actress does not represent these things, she does not represent the character at all. Racine's intention is plain enough; the only question is, can the actress carry it out with sufficient subtlety and power? The intensity of passion that breathes through the play, despite all the elaborate artificiality of its form, calls for a great actress to interpret it. But it is a matter of interpretation, not of creation. Mlle. Clairon, the great actress of the last century, has some remarks on Racine's text, which show that she understood with what care and study it should be handled. The words are, perhaps, worth quoting, if only for the purpose of recalling to mind one of the most perfect passages in Mme. Bernhardt's performance last night: "Phèdre a des remords: ils sont

vrais, continuels; l'exposé du premier acte, et sa mort au cinquième, le prouvent. Sa vertu surmonterait sans doute sa passion, si cette passion n'était produite que par l'égarement ordinaire des sens et de l'imagination ; mais la malheureuse Phèdre cède, en aimant, au pouvoir de Vénus. Une force supérieure l'emporte continuellement à faire, à dire ce que continuellement aussi sa vertu réprouve. Dans toute l'étendue du rôle ce combat doit être sensible aux yeux, à l'âme du spectateur. Je m'étais prescrit, dans tout ce qui tient aux remords, une diction simple, des accents nobles et doux, des larmes abondantes, une physionomie profondément douloureuse ; et dans tout ce qui tient à l'amour, l'espèce d'ivresse, de délire que peut offrir une somnambule, conservant dans les bras du sommeil le souvenir du feu qui la consume en veillant. Je pris cette idée dans ces vers :—

"Dieux ! que ne suis-je assise à l'ombre des forêts !
Quand pourrai-je, au travers d'une noble poussière,
Suivre de l'œil un char fuyant dans la carrière ?

. . . Insensée! Où suis-je, et qu'ai-je dit?
Où laissé-je égarer mes vœux et mon esprit?
Je l'ai perdu. Les dieux m'en ont ravi
l'usage," etc.

We do not know how Mlle. Clairon said those verses, and it is melancholy to think that a hundred years hence no one will know how Mme. Bernhardt used to say them; but Mlle. Clairon shows the right and sensitive way of dealing with Racine's poetry, and Mme. Bernhardt last night justified her by a reading of the verses exactly in accordance with her suggestion. Could anything have been more deliciously poetical than that kindling eager eye, the hand slowly stretched out, and the finger pointing into space, as Phèdre sees before her half in a dream the chariot "fuyant dans la carrière"? It is pleasant thus to connect the great actress of a century ago with her young successor in the present.

The power of Racine's play is indicated not only by the supreme position it holds in France, where every ambitious *débutante* seeks to play in it, and the actress who can best expound its chief character is

by general consent hailed the chief tragic actress of France, but by the frequency with which it has been played even in England. The performances of Rachel and Ristori in the part are still well remembered in this country, and when Mme. Bernhardt first played the part in London last year she had to compete with an exacting tradition. Of Ristori's performance we do not need to say much. Professor Morley praised it at the time in hyperbolical terms, but the French, though the actress was at one time exceedingly popular in Paris, never regarded Phèdre as one of her best parts, and would have smiled at Professor Morley's apparent preference of her to Rachel. The great Phèdre has hitherto been that of Rachel. It is useless to dilate upon Rachel's tragic power. Her performance alike in the second and in the fourth acts is declared by all competent critics to have been all but perfection. The doubtful question is rather whether she was capable of rendering the tenderness and the infinite piteousness of the hapless woman as she rendered her

transports of passion. We can conceive Rachel as having been better than Mme. Bernhardt in the denunciation of Œnone, and, indeed, M. Sarcey, in his notice of the performance of "Phèdre" by the Comédie Française in London last year, intimates that she was so; but we should like to know how Rachel said such passages as this:—

"Œnone, il peut quitter cet orgueil qui te blesse;
Nourri dans les forêts, il en a la rudesse.
Hippolyte, endurci par de sauvages lois,
Entend parler d'amour pour la première fois:
Peut-être sa surprise a causé son silence;
Et nos plaintes peut-être ont trop de violence."

The inexpressible tenderness with which those lines were sighed rather than spoken was all Mme. Bernhardt's own. This line again:—

"Et l'espoir malgré moi s'est glissé dans mon cœur."

And this, when she has discovered the love of Hippolyte and Aricie, and contrasts their affection with her own guilty passion:—

"Tous les jours se levoient clairs et sereins pour eux."

These were the passages which Mme.

Bernhardt marked with the most personal and enduring charm, and in these we cannot believe that she has not surpassed her forerunners.

A performance of "Phèdre," however, cannot rest on a few passages of infinite charm, and it is necessary to go through the play in a little more detail. In the first act the great scene is of course the revelation made by Phèdre to Œnone. The critical words are these :—

PHÈDRE.
Tu connais ce fils de l'Amazone,
Ce prince si longtemps par moi-même opprimé ?

ŒNONE.
Hippolyte ! grands dieux !

PHÈDRE.
C'est toi qui l'as nommé ! "

In reference to this passage G. H. Lewes made the following remarks on Rachel's performance :—"The one point in this scene to which I took exception was the mode of rendering the poet's meaning in this magnificent apostrophe, taken from Euripides, 'C'est toi qui l'as nommé !' She uttered it in a tone of sorrowing reproach which, as I conceive, is psychologically at variance

with the character and the position. For Phèdre has kept her love a secret; it is a horrible crime; she cannot utter the name of Hippolyte because of her horror at the crime; and not in sadness but in the sophistry of passion she tries indignantly to throw on Œnone the guilt of naming that which should be unnameable." It is interesting that Mme. Bernhardt should have played the part exactly as the critic rightly indicates it should be played. She turned with the words upon the nurse, and then shrank back in her seat, crouching together as if she were seeking to hide herself from the nurse's gaze and stifle her own thoughts. In the long speech that followed, the great line—

"C'est Vénus tout entière à sa proie attachée,"

was delivered with terrible passion and force. In the second act Phèdre betrays herself to Hippolyte. Phèdre is half in a dream—"somnambule," to use Mlle. Clairon's phrase. She is overpowered by the intensity of the passion that burns her, and as she speaks to Hippolyte she draws nearer with wooing sweetness

of speech and outstretched arms till she suddenly recalls herself to herself and shrinks back in sudden dread and horror. And then comes the long speech in which all restraints are broken through, sixty lines which have all to be delivered in a breath, ending with the frenzied wrenching of the sword from Hippolyte.

"Au défaut de mon bras prête-moi ton épée;
Donne!"

Mlle. Clairon frankly avowed that she could never deliver that speech to her satisfaction, and it must be marvellously difficult. Mme. Bernhardt's extraordinary rapidity of diction helps her much, and her fevered frenzy of manner when she clutches at the sword is probably the right manner. We wish we could have called up the spirit of Mlle. Clairon and asked her what she thought of it! In the fourth act, the scene where Phèdre suddenly turns upon the nurse was rendered with much power, though it ended perhaps with excessive violence. It would be superfluous to praise the pathos of the dying scene. It is

not contested that Mme. Bernhardt knows how to die.

The general impression left by the performance was favourable in a high degree. Mme. Bernhardt shows the possession of the *grande tenue* necessary for classic tragedy, as well as of the airy manner of light comedy in such a play as "Frou-Frou." The simply feminine side of the character was given as well as it could be given. The highly-impassioned scenes were on the whole first-rate, but here and there in the fourth act the voice was a little forced, and the manner lost a little in dignity. On the whole we are doubtful of the Comédie Française finding a successor to Mme. Bernhardt all in a moment.

Madame Devoyod was an admirable Œnone, sinister and unscrupulous as well as devoted. M. Sarcey says that she is the best Œnone he ever saw on the stage. M. Train was an agreeable surprise in Hippolyte. Not that his acting has made a bad impression in Manchester, but it was not supposed that the *jeune premier tragique* was in his line. He made up well, and his elocution

was most excellent. He well deserved the recall he received—and he was the only performer who received that honour last night beside Mme. Bernhardt herself. M. Talbot must forgive us for quoting M. Sarcey on his Théramène. M. Sarcey is perhaps a little ill-natured, but he is very comical, and M. Talbot can afford to be laughed at for a performance of a part so out of his usual line as Théramène, as long as he gives us such a Michonnet as he gave us the other evening.

"Talbot jouait Théramène. Non, qui n'a pas vu Talbot dans Théramène n'a rien vu. Mon Dieu! que j'ai regretté que nous ne fussions pas entre Parisiens! Quelle bonne partie de rire nous eussions faite! Ce diable de public anglais nous imposait! Il fallait devant lui composer son visage, se retenir! il était si sérieux lui-même! il avait l'air de trouver cela si naturel! Talbot racontant la mort de ce pauvre Hippolyte! Quelle bonne figure de porteur d'eau il s'était faite! et quelle déclamation! C'étaient des sanglots, c'étaient des soupirs, c'étaient des notes graves qu'il tirait du fond de

ses bottes, et tout au long des gémissements aigus qu'il prenait dans le haut de sa tête. Et des vers faux ! et des vers faux ! à faire frémir la nature ! Mais il ne semblait pas y prendre garde, tant il était absorbé par la douleur ! Il y avait dans la salle deux ou trois confrères en journalisme parisien. Nous n'osions pas nous regarder. Eh bien, mes amis, ces Anglais sont si parfaitement courtois, que cela a passé comme une lettre à la poste. Pas un muscle de leur visage n'a bougé, et quelques uns mêmes ont fait le geste d'applaudir. Ca, c'était un comble !"

"Les Anglais" may be "parfaitement courtois," but we venture to think that his Manchester audience knows how to distinguish M. Talbot's Michonnet from his Théramène.

June 26, 1880. W. T. A.

M. COQUELIN IN "CYRANO DE BERGERAC"

M. Coquelin has increased his artistic glory by "Cyrano" in a way that seemed impossible, and Manchester, like London, has shown that it deserved his visit. Why could there only be one performance? There are relatively few French people in this city, but there is plenty of alertness to French poetry and acting, and doubtless the Prince's Theatre could have been filled again and again. It is true that before the fame of "Cyrano" M. Coquelin was not always duly attended to in England. In one of his seasons, more than ten years ago, he was playing in a small and scanty house off Oxford Street in London. He acted Tartuffe, a part that calls out the highest and most formidable of his gifts; "Les Précieuses Ridicules" (fatal to follies of two centuries and a half ago), which is bound to live on the boards at least as long as M.

Coquelin, and which, owing to him, has escaped the second death to which literary satire is liable; some modern sentimental stuff in which, to his credit, he failed; and the "Gringoire" of Théodore de Banville, which is known in English by "The Ballad-monger," a blurred and sham-romantic version adapted for the conventions of Mr. Tree. Gringoire, the piteous, hungry, and unpresentable poet, through sheer force of pleading and *bravoure* overcomes the absurdity of his own appearance in the eyes of the woman he seeks. In that and other ways "Gringoire" served as a kind of slight rehearsal for "Cyrano." Only those who have heard M. Coquelin give the "Ballade des Pendus" could be prepared for the effects of "Ce sont les cadets de Gascogne" and "Je jette avec grâce mon feutre." He is not only a supreme comedian, but the master of all who recite. Most declaiming is mere drill and has nothing to do either with the soul of the speaker or the purpose of the author; it is something to hear the two in complete union. But De Banville's little piece, harmonious and gracious as it is, ranks

in scope and ambition beside "Cyrano" merely as a single *ballade* might rank beside a long concerted ode or poetical *fantasia*. "Cyrano" is kept up with half-Bacchic, half-chivalrous exuberance, and depends for its success on a heroic pitch of madness in the interpretation. It is not best read in the early morning, or in an Anglo-Saxon spirit. It cannot be read at all without some reserves. M. Edmond Rostand dedicates it, not, as he at first intended, to the soul of Cyrano, but to the actor into whom that soul has passed; and much of it would mean nothing without M. Coquelin. The prodigious and laboured apostrophe upon Cyrano's mighty nose, as well as his tirade against ambition and servitude in act ii., require all the force of the actor to make them pass. It is a literary play, and errs in a juster extreme than the usual literary play, which is a sterile, mulish negation of the dramatic art, and has only to be seen to collapse. "Cyrano" is hardly to be read without reference to the acting. This is only to say that it is not one of the great plays of the world, which keep their life

both as literature and as drama. Doubtless if we had phonographs and cinematographs of the Elizabethan theatre we should realize which monologues Shakspere wrote for Burbage, and how much that we only affect to admire in Shakspere, or ought not to admire, is explained by the terms of his theatrical art.

Playgoers are not amused by literary history, or there would be much to say on the real Cyrano, the source and model of M. Rostand's fancy. The plot is fiction; the hero is of course not only historical but is recreated, from the evidence of his own writings and many scattered notices, with all learning, sympathy, and truth to tradition. Cyrano de Bergerac was the most striking of all the fantastic and independent figures that preceded the age of Versailles, the age of Racine, of measure, of perfect form. He was actually a duellist, a Gascon, a satirist of free, unchastened power, a noble freethinker, a wit in several styles—including the fashionable one of points and preciosity,—and a dramatic creditor of Molière. He wrote little that has worn very well, but a

fundamental courage and candour gave singleness to his troubled life. The graft of M. Rostand has budded; the romance that he has invented for Cyrano brings out with surprising success the actual traits given to Cyrano by history. The love of over-sharpened literary turns, or "pointes," which is part of Cyrano's confession of faith, is authentic. His journey to the moon in a machine is a whim of his own; his following, shared by Molière, of the philosopher Gassendi, and his strain of superb Quixotism, were actual. M. Rostand has wrought a multitude of such things into his play, not with heavy German toil, but with a passion of creative fancy. He has endowed them with a wild impossible superfluity of life that carries us back to the early French Romantics, even to our first Elizabethans. As was remarked in the *Manchester Guardian* when the play was put on at the Lyceum, M. Rostand is a masterly "virtuoso" in rhyming heroic verse. His deft and acrobatic dexterity in varying and managing the very freest form of Alexandrine couplet is hardly realized by an English audience. The

trained elastic delivery of French actors recognises the effect where the lines are broken, and it is only in fragments, or in the high-flying continuous passages, that we feel we are hearing one of the great metres of the world, comparable—whatever prejudice may say—to those of Virgil and Shakspere. Perhaps the seal of M. Coquelin's art is to be seen in the endless variety of his harmonious delivery of verse—a variety through which the stately scheme of the couplet hums and murmurs, bringing the ear back to law and unity.

A full narrative of "Cyrano de Bergerac" need not be repeated. In the first act Cyrano is shown hectoring and silencing, for some reason that is left vague, a bad actor at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, provoking new enemies every moment from sheer bravado and excess of pluck, and making an example of an insolent marquis who refers to his nose. This nose is a part of the authentic legend; it is the grotesque "point de repère" of the whole play; it is the fatal sign of Cyrano's tragic disability to be accepted as a lover. We do not agree with those who

think that M. Coquelin has made too much of his nose. It is not Bardolphian or acquired; it is simply, by natural infelicity, an inch too long, and not shapely. It puts Cyrano out of the Court of Love. Any moderation in this feature would merely have made him credible as a suitor of Roxane; but he has got to be incredible. The first act, with all its bustle and vigour, prepares us too slowly for the story. The second is also crowded with good but purely irrelevant farce, and may have been written to give M. Coquelin *fils* his chance as Ragueneau, the versifying caterer, who feeds a gang of starving poets. We have never seen M. Jean Coquelin in the highest comedy; but he has many of his father's gifts, besides a certain captivating agility and stridency, in broad comedy. Cyrano, meanwhile, is summoned by Roxane, who announces her passion —as he at first hopes, for himself. But after agonies of suspense he learns it is for some one who is "beau"—Christian, who has newly joined the Gascon company, and who is not only "beau" but "bête," and cannot say a word on his own behalf.

This part was sufficiently acted by M. Volny. Then Cyrano conceives the noble fantasy on which the play revolves. He will offer his soul for the use of Christian. The poet and the Adonis shall make a hero of romance between them. Cyrano will tell Christian what to say, and will write love-epistles in his name. His own love will thus reach Roxane unknown to her and as proxy for another's; Christian will have the fruits.

In the third act, finding Christian still speechless on his own account, he stands in the dark under her balcony and pours out his spirit in a voice half-disguised. Roxane, a *précieuse*, is won by eloquence and literature as much as by beauty, and Christian climbs the balcony to take the reward of a kiss, Cyrano standing apart in the shadow. In this scene M. Coquelin showed his whole range. He gave the tender, idyllic, and enraptured verse, full of fantastic gleams and embroideries, with full effect. But the strokes of piteous humour which brought Cyrano back to the reality he had forgotten for an instant completed the picture.

His growl, "Monte donc, animal," to the uncomfortable, helpless Christian, hesitating to climb the balcony, and the apologue, suggested by the real Cyrano's "Histoire comique de la Lune," with which he stops the intruding rival while the pair are being hastily married, were much deeper and finer in their effect than the expanded repetition of the "Gringoire" motive. De Guiche, the frustrated rival, and commander of the corps, orders it off to Arras, and in the fourth act the Gascons are shown starving and hard pressed before that city. Cyrano has continued the game for Christian; he has spent his soul in letters to Roxane, penned in Christian's name, and much oftener than Christian knows. He has carried them in the early morning to the messenger across the enemy's fire. Another scene of *bravoure* follows at the expense of De Guiche, and at last Roxane, wooed to face the peril by the supposed letters of Christian, arrives just as the corps is to be sacrificed at the post of danger;—such is the vengeance of De Guiche. Christian, whose part has thus far

been undistinguished, now has his chance. He detects for the first time Cyrano's secret, and sees that Roxane chiefly loves him for his unacknowledged loan levied on the soul of Cyrano. He insists on a revelation to Roxane, that she may choose fairly, but before this crisis is reached he is shot by the enemy. M. Coquelin is a tragedian; this is proved by his gaze, volcanic start, and accent when he learns this news. He is just on the verge of speaking to Roxane for himself; but he stops, and cries, "C'est fini." Fifteen years pass before she understands. The fifth act is an epilogue, conceived in a strain less safe than the rest, and verging on the kind of sham-autumnal sentiment which is easier for a French than an English gorge. It was, however, played with equal skill. Roxane is in retreat among the "Dames de la Croix," worshipping the memory of her husband Christian and his matchless eloquence, and bearing his last letter about her. Cyrano, wounded to death by a treacherous enemy, but hiding his pain, pays her his regular visit of fraternal consolation. She lets him read the last

letter of Christian, and guesses his secret by his tones. He denies to the last; and the resource of M. Coquelin is rather unfairly, though not unsuccessfully, strained by a high-wrought finale of delirium in which Cyrano defies the Lies and Cowardices which had been his lifelong enemies.

M. Coquelin was called forward several times in honour of the performance which has graced his first visit to Manchester. He must come again, and stay longer; we cannot doubt that the public would respond. We ought also to have Signora Duse, in order to complete the trio of the great foreign artists; for Mme. Bernhardt is not strange to us. What is it that distinguishes M. Coquelin from the rest of his own company, expert as these are, and from the best English actors? Many of his troupe deserve praise besides those we have named. Mme. Esquilar was a competent though rather a modern Roxane, Mme. Simonson said her few lines as a "soubrette" with much finish, the Gascon humorists had drilled themselves in the best imaginable form, M. Desjardins

looked well as De Guiche, and of Coquelin *fils* we have spoken already. But it is no reproach to this admirable band from the Porte Saint-Martin to reserve another kind of praise for their chief. At one time he seems, to use Pope's words on Shakspere, "not so much an imitator as an instrument of nature." At another he seems a man, speaking for himself, who has strayed into a theatrical company. At another he seems not only a master of acting at every point, but standing dispassionately above and aloof from his subject-art, or moving with infallible hand but unstirred pulse the puppet that he inspires.

June 22, 1899. O. E.

MME. BERNHARDT IN "LA TOSCA"

"La Tosca," which is said to be a favourite play with Mme. Bernhardt, has been called with very little exaggeration "the vanishing-point of art and the death of the theatre." To justify the severity of this criticism one has only to consider for a moment the chief situation of the piece. In the third act the heroine and her lover, the hero, are placed in adjoining rooms, the heroine in sight of the audience, the hero out of sight but not out of hearing. The man is then put to the torture, and the woman, looking into the torture chamber, is invited to procure his release by giving up a secret which they are both bound in honour to keep. Now of course this is very poignant while it lasts, but is it—for this is very material to a judgment on the play—*dramatically* poignant, or is it merely poignant in the same

sense as a revolting accident in the street?

The chief difference between the two sensations, we take it, is this—that the poignancy of a situation strictly dramatic depends on one's interest in something personal and individual in its victims, while the poignancy of the fatal accident in the street springs rather from the sudden shock and humiliation of seeing everything personal and human in a man, every element of will and character, everything *dramatic* in short, crushed and bundled aside in a moment by the coarse victory of impersonal physical force over animal life. Not only is there no shred of dramatic pathos in the catastrophe; there is a sort of belittling and degradation of everything that is dramatic—everything that springs from character, that is—in this spectacle of the impotence of thought and will in the face of physical destruction. As the vanishing point of dramatic interest it thus stands at the opposite pole to, say, the murder of Desdemona, which is tragic in the truly dramatic sense because it is the result and

gives the measure of the most intense personal passion. In the one case there is a feeling of horror at the helplessness and abrupt annihilation of a human being, "the universe of a character"; in the other there is a feeling akin to terror and pity at the tremendous forces at work in that universe.

Now both these spectacles may be called "harrowing." But that the one is dramatic and the other undramatic, and that the situation in "Othello" is dramatic and the situation in "La Tosca" the reverse, may be best understood by reflecting what each would lose by standing absolutely alone as a separate *tableau*, with the earlier portions of each play omitted. The death of Desdemona given in this way would be grotesque and disgusting. Nobody would go to a theatre to see a man, A, smothering a woman, B, with the pillows. But we really do not think that the sort of impression created by the torture scene in "La Tosca" would be greatly lessened if the preliminary love-making between La Tosca and Cavaradossi and the intriguing by Scarpia were

left out. When you come to hear a man moaning, with a spike driven into his head, in one room, and see a woman shrieking and writhing as she looks on, it does not much matter who the man is and who the woman. If Scarpia the villain had been under the torture, and, say, the Princess Orionia looking on, the scene would have done nearly as well. When it comes to thumbscrews and Luke's iron crowns, your feeling of disgust and pain is pretty much the same whether the victim be a "sympathetic" character or the opposite. A sensitive woman looking on at the torture of a mere acquaintance or of a stranger might have done everything that La Tosca does in the play, not as the outcome of personal affection, but in mere human protest against inhuman outrage. Her love for Cavaradossi is not necessary to make her inarticulate with distress and anger, nor is any interest in either of them on the spectator's part necessary to give the scene its unpleasant fascination. It is simply the fascination of a murder or of a horrible accident in the street, which nine persons out of

ten would run to see, only to feel pained and disgusted while they were seeing it. Sardou understands perfectly the fascination of these things, and no doubt Mme. Bernhardt, always looking for new *tours de force*, thought that she could give by her art a dramatic interest to a scene in which all dramatic interest is for the moment obliterated. It is the incorrigible mistake of great performers, who never seem to understand that a mere mechanical forcing up of the pitch of horror in a situation takes the audience out of the hands of the actor and fills it with sensations which may be confused with admiration for the actor, but with which the acting has really very little to do. Mrs. Bernard Beere played the scene as well five years ago as Mme. Bernhardt played it at the Prince's Theatre on Saturday, and we dare say Mrs. Patrick Campbell could play it as well if she cared to try.

As the whole play was made for the sake of this scene, not much more need be said of it. Part of its success in Paris was due to its elaborate mounting. Sardou, who knows

the public's taste for gaudy spectacle, has always in late years been trying to present in each of his one-part pieces a specific social or historical "*milieu*," as Taine would say,—a Byzantine Imperial *milieu* in "Theodora," an Alexandrian *milieu* in "Cleopatra," a *milieu* of the Revolutionary period in "Thermidor," and apparently an Empire *milieu* in his new "Madame Sans-Gêne," to fall in with the late French "boom" in all things Napoleonic, be they furniture, clothes, or memoirs. In the second act of "La Tosca," by way of meeting this popular demand for painty spectacular history, he introduced a great picture of the Court held at Rome during the Neapolitan occupation of the period. As Mme. Bernhardt seems to travel with little or no scenery there was no spectacle on Saturday, and the act, being quite superfluous except for a few words exchanged by La Tosca and Scarpia, fell quite flat. But of course the words do not matter greatly in a play written equally for performance in Paris, London, Chicago, St. Petersburg, and Buenos Ayres, and chiefly intended,

outside Paris, to give an opportunity for Mme. Bernhardt to show the music of her voice and the curious and infinite variety of her attitudes.

July 30, 1894. C. E. M.

MME. BERNHARDT IN "LA DAME AUX CAMÉLIAS"

EVERY year that "La Dame aux Camélias" is played it looks in some respects odder and more obsolete, and yet it is kept fresh, or rather in a kind of pickle, not really fresh but still fit for consumption, by the masterly dramatic workmanship, in the narrower sense, of the younger Dumas. Like the statesman who valued himself most on his Latin verses, Dumas, a master of stage craft, valued himself most on his criticisms of current morality. As a moral critic he was not of the first rate, and now the whole of the social world which he chastised has passed away or taken other forms; sentiment is still talked, but not as Armand talked it; and though we are still good or bad or miserable, as the case may be, it almost seems, when one hears this obsolete tract, as if we had found new ways of being it, and wore our rue with a

difference. And yet every scene is so competently worked out, its climax so well led up to, its net impression on the audience so adroitly used as the starting point of the next, that one never quite tires of the piece. One has heard of common sense almost amounting to genius. Competence almost amounts to genius in such plays as "La Dame aux Camélias" or Scribe's "Adrienne Lecouvreur," which has not a finely turned sentence in it nor a single character profoundly studied, and yet is so perfectly put together and hands its interest on so steadily from scene to scene that one follows it with more attention and pleasure than some of the greatest of plays.

If one does not find it easy to take very seriously the first sentimental passages between Marguerite and Armand after the clattering supper, certainly Mme. Bernhardt does not make it any the easier by cutting off Dumas' end of the first act and bringing down the curtain on a rapturous cry of "Oh l'amour, l'amour!" But when you reach the entry of Armand's father, and the real stress of the story's sadness

begins, you forget that you were laughing. And of Mme. Bernhardt's acting from that moment it is enough to say to those who know it that it has lost nothing of its incomparable grace and delicacy. It is impossible to describe the value and interest which the actress's delivery lends to passages with no great quality of their own. Uttered by her, such sentences as "on nous abandonne et les longues soirées succèdent aux longs jours," or "ainsi, quoi qu'elle fasse, la créature tombée ne se relèvera jamais" sink into the mind and remain vibrating there, like commonplace words set to the finest music. It is not that her delivery presents them in high relief. As elocution among actors goes, comparatively little relief or sharpness of edge is given to any of her passages. Rather she contrives to envelop whole scenes in a softening and blurring haze of diffused tenderness, the effect of the caressing voice carried on and rendered continuous by marvellous fertility in expression and gesture. The writing and re-writing of the farewell letter to Armand, the more restrained pas-

sages of the dialogue with the elder Duval, and, again, the more subdued passages of the conflict of agonizing passions in the fourth act—these were fine enough, but one almost forgot their excellence in the supreme pathos of the scene of reconciliation. We can remember no more deeply touching moment at the theatre than that at which Marguerite rises from the sofa just before her death and tries to walk a few steps with a pitiful little attempt to be strong and at ease, like a child that hopes it can go alone. At the wistful fingering of Nichette's bridal veil, at the repetition by heart of the letter from Armand's father, and at the gesture with which Marguerite runs to Armand, crying, "Oh! ce n'est pas toi; il est impossible que Dieu soit si bon," Mme. Bernhardt again reached almost the highest point of achievement. But the whole performance was wonderfully fine.

July 18, 1898. C. E. M.

MME. BERNHARDT IN "FÉDORA"

Last year, in "La Tosca," we could study in its simplest form the kind of play and of heroine which M. Sardou invents in order to evoke the lower gifts of Mme. Bernhardt. La Tosca, through hearing the cries of her lover while the police torture him, is wrung into dishonourably revealing the refuge of a fugitive, whose blood is thus upon her hands. Her lover is the first to denounce her, and she dies. Here the joint aim of playwright and actress was simple and unlawful; the nerves were to be violently vexed, partly by sounds in imitation of physical agony suffered by a person unseen, and partly by the sight of La Tosca's anguish, itself supposed to be created by the same cause. There was no attempt at character. Mme. Bernhardt has a genius for sinking to such parts.

Though "Fédora," played yesterday at the Prince's Theatre, opens

with murder and ends with self-poisoning, no effects of the torture-chamber kind intrude upon the struggle that is waged in the heroine's soul between love and revengefulness. The tragical point is that these passions are concentrated upon the same man. The Princess Fédora has to detect and punish the slayer of her betrothed Wladimir, of whom, first as wounded and then as dead, the audience has only a glimpse. Mme. Bernhardt lamented him very discreetly, doubtless to avoid discounting the passionate exhibition that was to follow, but with the effect of slightly weakening her convincingness afterwards as the avenger of blood. Fédora then follows to Paris one Loris Ipanoff, to whom suspicion points as Nihilist and assassin. In the second act comes the only truly subtle or intellectual part of the tragedy, the only part where Mme. Bernhardt's task was delicate and difficult and worthy of her finer powers. Fédora, while spying on Ipanoff, and while for this purpose feigning to accept his addresses, finds herself enamoured of him

(we will use the word "love" for convenience). The subtlety begins when the real love and the feigned play into one another and alternate, and when she utilises the real love, which is half-conscious, in order to make the feigned love, which is all she will admit even to herself, life-like. At this point Mme. Bernhardt triumphed; one felt the difference between her infallible art and the laboured competence or occasional flashes of other actresses. Her decisive, tranquil tones in arranging her espionage, her dissembled reception of Ipanoff, her waverings between hot and cold as she forgot or remembered her purpose, formed a series of effects to which the two closing acts, much simpler in motive, could provide no parallel. The climax of the second act is the assurance that Fédora receives from Ipanoff that he was really the slayer of Wladimir. The climax of the third is his further explanation that, in doing so, he struck as an injured husband, not as a Nihilist. The late Wladimir, it appears, was a poor creature, and letters are produced showing that

he had only courted Fédora for her fortune. The smile of mingled relief and rage with which Mme. Bernhardt, humming changes under her breath on the word "fortune," reads out this tidings, is admirable. But meantime Fédora must save Loris from a death-trap she has previously laid for him, in concert with her police. To prevent him from going out she puts her back against the door, and bids him stay with her. This was one of the few moments or attitudes in the play recalling something like classic tragedy.

But the fourth act shows how she has already done the mischief. The authorities in Russia have hounded down Ipanoff's family, his brother and mother are dead, his property is forfeited, and he condemned by default. He bursts out in fury against the unknown denouncer; evidence is on its way which will discover Fédora. After a wild, hysterical dialogue she confesses. Loris threatens to strangle her, but she takes poison. The physical symptoms of death are softened and idealised; it is best to die beauti-

fully, classically, in regions far above the head of your playwright and his violences. But this was only one of the effects which such an artist as Mme. Bernhardt can distil for us out of crude or coarse matter. The profound accent on her "Moi!" when her agent is inquiring who the woman is that Loris pursues; the little trick by which she twice wipes the touch of Loris off her hand at the stage when she thinks him a mean assassin; her very slight but impressive changes of attitude as he tells his long exculpatory story; her faint shock or tremor when the word "espionne" falls from Ipanoff in unwitting application to herself — these and a hundred other points are not in themselves so notable as their fleeting, almost involuntary, character. As Ipanoff, M. Darmont, who has a good presence and a strong voice, but a somewhat pedantic delivery, worked very hard to keep pace with his changing passions. Minor parts like Gretch, the police agent, and Tchilof, the jeweller, were quite efficiently taken by MM. Deval and Lacroix. Mme. Valdey, as the light-

hearted conspirator Countess Olga, who is "plus avancée dans la politique que dans la morale," was a most charming humorist, and her mere deliberation and clearness in making her points was a grateful concession to English ears.

July 8, 1895. O. E.

MADAME MODJESKA IN "FROU-FROU"

It appears to have been agreed in London that Mme. Modjeska's Frou-Frou was not a success. One very superior authority remarked, indeed, on the whole performance, that "perhaps never before in the history of our theatre, used as it is to such spectacles, has there been so fatal an error of judgment, or so signal an instance of misplaced ambition." We suppose every one has a right to his opinion, but this particular opinion seems to us erroneous. A good Frou-Frou must be and do two things. She must be personally likeable by her audience, and she must be able to play the first two acts with the almost fatuous light-heartedness they require. In other words, an actress must have charm, and the power of appearing extremely young. No one will deny, we suppose, that Mme. Modjeska has the former in

a pre-eminent degree, and it is to be supposed that she hardly needs to be told that Frou-Frou is at first, till the stern discipline of life comes upon her, a frivolous girl, and must be represented as such or not at all. Mme. Modjeska does not need to be taught the A B C of her art. Now, it seems to us, and, to judge from the delight and interest with which her performance was followed, it seemed to her last night's audience at the Prince's Theatre, that the second act, at all events, showed all the qualities of an ideal Frou-Frou. She was charming, she was girlish, she was—to use a word for which we have no equivalent — *étourdie*. It is true that Mme. Modjeska does not represent Frou-Frou as a mere coquette, with little heart and no depth of feeling ; but if she had done so, she would have disregarded the authors' most evident intentions, which are, surely, to paint a woman whose finer nature has been warped and overlaid by the successive spoiling of father, sister, and husband. It is brains that are wanting to Frou-Frou, a clear eye to see where she is going, and a strong will to

stop herself in time, and not at all tenderness of heart or depth of feeling. If Mme. Modjeska is wrong here, so was Sarah Bernhardt, and so, if we may trust tradition, was Aimée Desclée. If there is anything wanting in this part of the play, and very little indeed is wanting, it is because Mme. Modjeska is not quite *mignonne* enough for the part. She has, so to speak, to play down to it, not only intellectually—of that she is quite capable—but also physically, which is more difficult. A little more amplitude of presence would often be serviceable to Sarah Bernhardt, but in this case her phenomenal slightness was a positive advantage.

To go into details. The scene with Louise in the first act, where the elder sister tells her of Sartorys' proposal, was admirably played. It was arch, bright, and above all eminently young. In the second act the little scene over the piano with Brigard was excellent comedy, but a good deal was here lost in the English version, which could not convey the peculiar comic effect of the lines from the French vaudeville. The

translation, it may be remarked by the way, which Mr. Comyns Carr has executed, is otherwise at once faithful and idiomatic, and very superior to the wretched versions of "Heartsease" and "Adrienne Lecouvreur." The rehearsal scene was gaily and charmingly done, though the stiffness of the amateur actress was perhaps unnecessarily exaggerated. Then follows, with the third act, the crisis. Frou-Frou finds that her sister is ousting her from her proper place in her own home, and seeks to win it back before it is too late. The final outburst was led up to with all that delicate art we have learnt to expect from the actress. The scene with her father, in its alternations between smiles and tears, was excellent, and that with her husband at once winning and painful. The poor young wife is like a bird beating its wings in vain against the bars of its golden cage. Then, as a last hope, comes the appeal to Louise. It was powerfully played, but it ought to have gone faster yet. Frou-Frou is at the white heat of passion ; she is beside herself for the moment. These extremes

have violent ends; they cannot in the nature of things last long; and to prevent any sense of strain or unreality the scene must therefore be carried through with lightning rapidity. The replies of Frou-Frou should ring like pistol shots. It is, however, physically impossible for Madame Modjeska to play the scene at this rate in the English language, and some of its effect is therefore lost. The final exit, too, rapid as it is, is not quite rapid enough. We will not make comparisons, but just indicate these points of difference between this and a previous performance. A friendly correspondent has indeed written to us to complain of certain comparisons that we have already made. "I see," he says, "that you institute comparisons between Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and Mme. Modjeska. I shall take the liberty to observe that this is hardly fair, considering that the great French actress played always in her own language; moreover she plays in works of her own literature, representing French women and plays in originals,—while Mme. Modjeska labours under the disadvantage of playing in a foreign

and very difficult language, she plays works foreign to her nation, and plays them in versions which, to say the least, are very far from conveying the force of the originals. It would be only in seeing Mme. Modjeska playing in Polish a Polish play that a comparison would be fair." These remarks are, of course, perfectly just, and it must be understood that in any comparison instituted between Mme. Modjeska and another actress what is compared is simply the performance as it is played before an English audience in the English language. That performance has such and such qualities, but this may be said without any prejudice to the possibility and even probability that if Mme. Modjeska had been playing in her own language the qualities would have been in some respects different and perhaps far greater. It is so obvious, in fact, how a foreign language must fetter an actress, that it appeared that we could safely leave our readers to make this necessary qualification to our remarks. To produce a great effect in a great situation an actress must literally

throw herself body and soul into her work. The check and injury it must be to have to bear in mind matters of accent and pronunciation at the moment when the utmost demand is made upon the powers of expression is sufficiently obvious. If Mme. Modjeska indeed had needed indulgence, it would have been imperatively necessary to claim it for her on these grounds, and to compliment her upon her extraordinary proficiency in our difficult language. We hold that we paid her a compliment by putting these matters aside as of no moment. But we fully allow that to give a final judgment on her powers it would be necessary to learn Polish and hear her in Warsaw. We believe that Polish is one of the most impracticable of languages, but we are sure that the pleasure so gained would repay the effort.

The opening of the fourth act was touchingly played with a kind of sad dignity which suited the part. The scene with Sartorys was moving and powerful, and the death scene in the fifth act touching. Its great merit was the continued thought for the child at the dying woman's feet.

Sarah Bernhardt forgot him too soon. It was the one fault of her exquisite performance in this act. The scene is, however, but "a purple patch" upon the play in any case, and the English version is here necessarily inadequate. "Pauvre Frou-Frou!" is untranslatable.

Mr. A. Beaumont played the part of the rakish father, so admirably given by Dieudonné two years ago. The performance was finished and careful, and would have been admirable in the third act if Mr. Beaumont had only expressed more clearly the deeper feelings of the man. Mr. Forbes Robertson's Sartorys was an interesting but rather thin performance. There is an immense reserve of strength in that personage, and this might have been better conveyed. Mr. Norman Forbes was a fair Valréas, not so good as that delightful *jeune premier*, Berton, who was here two years ago, but probably better than the last French representative of the part. Miss Lizzie Williams gave a fair average rendering of Louise. Miss Dora Vivian, as that woman of the world, the Baronne de Cambri, moved well, and,

without possessing the finish the part requires, was yet lively and agreeable throughout.

Nov. 11, 1881. W. T. A.

IBSEN

MR. AND MRS. CHARRINGTON (MISS JANET ACHURCH) IN "A DOLL'S HOUSE"

THE repute of Ibsen, since he first created a large band of dervishes howling against him, and a smaller band who howled on his behalf at all costs against the larger, seems to have settled into something European, which can be gauged reasonably and in his own spirit, though not with his power, of severe analysis. England is one of the provinces where the dispute, so far as it has not collapsed into apathy, has remained somewhat sectarian. Those who merely mistake Ibsen's situations for trivial and his characters for grotesque; those who from an impulse of self-preservation, representing the classes he dissects, dislike the process of dissection; those who thank Heaven that, if Norwegians are like this, they are not like Norwegians; and those who take the stronger line of idealistic theory in art, are all still vowed in

some kind of muddled alliance against others who wish to fetter Ibsen to his own characters, or to present his art as the only art of the future. Actually, Ibsen is one of the three or four living persons with a great mastery of dramatic interest and form, and one of the most incisive and critical depictors of society, not specially as it is in Norway, but as it necessarily is at this moment wherever the ideas of the French Revolution are found newly acting upon a small, discontented, and hampered but awakening community. It is also plain to all who take Ibsen seriously that, despite his rigid inferences from the situations which he conceives, he is one of the most agile and volatile of thinkers in changing those situations; that the "Wild Duck" is meant to trip up those who take him as a doctrinaire rather than a dramatist; that each of his plays is quite different in its determining idea; and that his progress and freedom in this respect is the chief reason why he leads his public such a dance and always stimulates those who scrutinise him.

The "Doll's House" ("Et Dukkehjem") is intended to excite by dramatic means critical thought upon the difference between marriage as it reasonably is and marriage as it has come to be socially conceived and enforced. But there is this difficulty: the critic in the play is the critic because she is the victim; and she is therefore not impartial at all, but emotional, wrong-headed in detail, and forced by dramatic need and likelihood to act out her protest in an enigmatical, sudden way. Nora Helmer within three days of dramatic and three hours of real time is transformed from a liar, equivocator, and blind creature of society into a judge of society, who sentences herself to exile from society in order to take stock of it. She has run into a scrape involving technical forgery in order to benefit her father and husband. This is her one independent action before the play opens. In all else she is what her husband, ignorant of her act, wishes her to be. He is no empty tyrant; Ibsen does not make him a mere jointed model. He is orderly, ambitious, full of rigid

dignity and censorship, a representative of the formulated code, and that not in its most repulsive shape. Still he is a sensualist, filled with the Eastern view that his wife has no soul, and he covers up these traits by the language of semi-romantic passion and *égoisme à deux*. By a very ingenious train of events he is made to discover the danger of scandal at the very moment when his wife knows that the danger is removed. Trusting in him, she does not at first relieve his fears, and after his brutal but natural explosion of rage and abuse she understands him for the first time. A melodramatist would end with reconciliation when the satisfactory truth is cleared up; not so Ibsen. Nora resolves to live with Torwald no more, but to go from his house and reconsider her life, leaving her children. She does this, leaving open a little loophole, left expressly quite mystical and dim, for some future reunion, when the "miracle of miracles" shall have come about, and these two creatures can truly associate and not merely cohabit. There are minor trains of action in

the play: the catastrophe is hastened by the shady Krogstad, and stayed by Mrs. Linden accepting him; and Dr. Rank, the dying but hitherto undeclared lover of Nora, averts his power to help her by an untimely declaration. There is nothing to add to the acknowledgment, made by every serious critic, of Ibsen's strong and convincing craftsmanship.

The play was, we believe, first shown to the English public some eight years ago by the two leading performers of last night. The lapse of time has in some few particulars coarsened, but has in many much strengthened, the rendering of Nora by Miss Janet Achurch (Mrs. Charrington). She has not ceased to give certain points with an unnecessary kind of bouncing emphasis, or to fail in economy of gesture. This kind of defect came out most fully but not solely in the second act, when she was alone with her meditations of self-slaughter. It was no doubt due to an impulse to overpress the hoydenish side of Nora, and to make Ibsen's meaning clear to the slowest. But it would be quite out

of just scale if we dwelt on this defect. The broad lines of the character, the direct phrase of "living with a strange man and bearing him three children," the thrilling irrelevance of the retort to Torwald's plea that a man cannot sacrifice his honour, that "millions of women have done so," and many other speeches, were sent home with due accent and conviction. The great difficulty of marking persuasively the abrupt change, or rather realization, of Nora's nature, which the dramatist is forced enormously to foreshorten in point of time, was met as well as may be. Since she began to play the part, Mrs. Charrington has greatly increased her skill in conveying both Nora's insincerity when she fibs and her slight premonitions of the blow and of the new vision that is to fall upon her. She forces the deep or metallic notes in her voice much less than in her playing of Cleopatra.

Mr. Charles Vane acted Torwald well in the last act, but not so well before. The part is hard, for Torwald has to be wooden and exposed to irony, but not too much so. Mr.

Vane, however, warmed up to his work, and when Torwald came in fuddled and rose from Sultan-like philandering to a certain male fury of invective he did very satisfactorily. The rendering of the blackmailer Krogstad by Mr. Ryder Boys was adequate and appropriate. Mr. Charrington played his old part of Dr. Rank with no diminished subtlety. His quiet, hollow voice was well modulated, and he missed nothing. His avowal of devotion to Nora was less effectively given than several incidental strokes, as when he thanks her for a cigar light and for her forgiveness. Mr. Charrington ought to be a very admirable actor of all such parts, which owe their force to not being quite in the foreground, and call for special restraint. Mrs. Linden is meant to lack colour and to have almost lost her looks and zest in life, but not all her power of recovering them. Miss Raffles-Brooke would have made more of this part if she had trained the fuller tones in her voice, but she stood gracefully and played with due repression. Miss Marie Fauvet as the parlour-maid

had and fully used her chance to move about with pretty effect, and she will with use learn to speak better. The few other characters, including those of the children, were taken sufficiently. The Gentlemen's Concert Hall, engaged by the Manchester committee of the Independent Theatre, was full, and the curtain was raised twice in deference to the repeated calls by a large minority of the audience. It is a matter for regret that this performance could only be given once in Manchester, but we may add here that, so far as it is dependent on private enterprise and patriotism, it calls for general gratitude. To promote the presenting of a great or singular work of art is a kind of civic benefit that ought to be imitated freely by those who have the means.

April 13, 1897. O. E.

MISS ELIZABETH ROBINS IN "THE MASTER-BUILDER"

THOUGH Ibsen has been carefully played in Manchester already, we have never yet quite had our chance with him. During this week he has been, on the whole, so played —under the auspices of the Manchester Independent Theatre Committee — that if we dislike him we dislike him at his best. The audience of Tuesday accepted, and often admired, the acting in "Hedda Gabler," but not the piece. Last night the house was bewildered, for reasons not hard to find, into a certain acquiescence, though not into conviction.

Though "The Master-Builder" is much harder than "Hedda Gabler" to understand, its difficulties can be better hidden on the stage. They are hidden not merely by a performance of talent like that which we are noticing, but by any perform-

ance. They are apparent to the reader; he perceives that Ibsen has got over them much more by surprising constructive cleverness than by harmonising them inwardly. This is only to say that the play is a good play and an unsatisfactory piece of writing. There are, however, even on the stage, enigmatical points at which the author has left success or failure in the hands of the actor. To criticise last night's performance is to indicate how some of these points were steered past.

In London this play was produced and printed early last year, and at the end of the printed edition can be read an ingenious letter by Mr. William Archer. He transposes the early part of the play, before Hilda appears, into English terms, making "Sheerness" a publisher, in order to prove, first, that Solness' position is humanly credible and natural; and, secondly, that Mr. Walkley, of the *Speaker*, is wrong when he objects that much of the play is "meaningless except as symbol." Mr. Archer says, in effect, that Hilda and Solness merely use metaphorical expressions, and that it is untrue, and

unjust to complain, that any of these expressions are "meaningless as between Solness and Hilda, and significant only as between the poet and his readers." This is the point, undoubtedly; but we feel that Mr. Archer is quite wrong—wrong in his plea, and even wrong in supposing it necessary to make such a point in order to save the play as an *acted* play. The master-builder, Solness, begins as an abject rascal of real life. He keeps down a young man of talent, Ragnar Brovik, by playing upon a passion he has aroused in Brovik's betrothed, Kaia, who is a secretary in the office. This is an opening for a realistic play of intrigue and swindle. By the last act, when Hilda Wangel has exerted her full influence on Solness, he has turned into a repentant sinner, an idealist, a dreamer, whom Hilda mysteriously enables to regain his self-respect and his zest in life, by the virtual promise that she will belong to him (did the audience understand this?) if he will achieve a certain strange adventure. But this adventure, the climbing by Solness of the weather-

cock, in the teeth of his own bodily cowardice, can only appeal to us properly as a *symbol*. It is, if Mr. Archer will forgive us, not a *metaphor*, for Solness really climbs up. It is not, again, a mere acrobatic feat, for there would be nothing in that. It is a symbol of a thousand things hinted at in the play—of self-renunciation, seizure of the joy of life, defiance of law—and as such it is finely conceived. But by this time the play is no longer one of vulgar life at all, any more than "Peer Gynt" is. We move in a pure fairy-land of emblem, poetry, and irony. Now Ibsen's skill comes in, in managing the transition between the real and the fantastic worlds. He does so before the audience know where they are, by just what Mr. Archer appears to deny, by the device of Solness going mad. Solness' invading madness takes the form, in part of a belief in his "silent will," in part of a disordered recollection; so that he can be made by suggestion, and can make himself, to suffer actual delusions about the past. This and no other device could lead an audience

blindly on from the region of the divorce court to that of the trolls and spirits of the air; and Ibsen works it.

Mr. Acton Bond, as Solness, grasped the necessity to represent distraction, but missed the subtleties. His performance was a very careful effort to bring Ibsen's meaning within the usual repertory of tones and motions available to a practical player. His best moment was in the first of his declamations to the "Mighty Lord" in the final scene. His exhibition, both active and passive, of the quasi-hypnotic influence, which is made so much of in the play, was not at all taken from real life. Miss Florence Farr, who played Kaia picturesquely, finds less scope in such submissive parts than in more varied ones. Miss Alexes Leighton, as Aline, was a suitably low-toned and venomous wife, though too emphatic in her jealousy for even Hilda to have stayed on in the house. Mr. Sugden, competent as ever, was the conventional doctor (Herdal). Miss Elizabeth Robins has now wrought herself firmly, and we may say abso-

lutely, into the part of Hilda Wangel, as she chooses to conceive it, and as, perhaps, it is alone possible to play it credibly. So far we can speak without stint, but we differ from the common opinion that Miss Robins duly fills the character which the *reader* is compelled to imagine. She has voice, grace of movement, wit, and a charm that is shrewish when that is necessary; she can fully express an irresponsible desire for the "joy of life." This was enough for the audience; it carried them away; it was all they tried to understand; but it is only half the character. Ibsen really presents that character as full of discords; it has not only the qualities shown by Miss Robins, but a strain of human sympathy and of distaste for ugly actions, and, in short, of spiritual fineness. The actress was naturally embarrassed by some of these discords. One of her best pieces of drollery was the wholly disengaged, lolling air in which she said: "Yes, father's alive," in the first act. It was a mistake after this to try and put much intensity into the statement

that she was "fond of father." So, too, it was doubtless correct to show total indifference to the tragic death of Solness' children ; but the attempt to instil humanity and warmth into the aspiration after building "cosy homes" for fellow-creatures sounded hollow in consequence. Hilda's weary touch of melancholy when she wishes that "the whole thing might vanish away," and her indignation at Solness' meanness over the drawings, though given with much conscience, somewhat jarred on the general and over-powering impression of ebullience, audacity, and natural immorality. Some of these contradictions lie at the door of Ibsen, but some may be due to the actress over-pressing, so as to falsify or slur the other features, those which she can render so buoyantly.

It will be plain that, in our belief, the arrival here of Miss Robins and her company is rather an important theatrical event, and that their acting has a claim to more respect and study than it has in all quarters received. It is possible to dislike Ibsen, but people ought to go and

see his dramas, if only because Ibsen has the power of creating actors; and the more intelligent actors we can get here the better.

Dec. 1, 1894. O. E.

MODERN ENGLISH PLAYS

"THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY"

At last a living Englishman has written a play of which it is possible to be proud. "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" is by far the most interesting, moving, and suggestive piece by a contemporary English author that has been put upon the English stage for twenty years. "The Profligate," produced here four years ago, caused some of us to cherish the hope that in Mr. Pinero an English dramatist had arisen. But though the piece had great merits, it was here and there terribly lacking in literary tact—Hugh Murray's agricultural metaphor must have given the author many an uncomfortable twinge since then—and the inner truth and necessity of the situation were, at bottom, shirked. The piece was still second-rate when compared with good French work, and to hail Mr. Pinero on the strength of it as

the English Augier was mere insularity and provincialism. It could at most entitle him to rank with an Ohnet. But "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" is another affair altogether. It deals with dark and hidden sides of life with the most perfect frankness, with a total absence of cant and sermonising, and yet—perhaps we should say therefore—in a manner most conducive to edification.

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us."

That stringent but wholesome doctrine of the impossibility of wiping out the past, and of the countless reverberations and reactions of wrong-doing which George Eliot wrote her books to illustrate, is the doctrine of this play. It deals with shady themes and doubtful people, but it is as moral as "Romola." Moreover, we cannot be mistaken in thinking that there is no concession to a facile British optimism in all this, but that the writer sees life in that way, and sees it truly. The subject of the "Dame aux Camélias" trying to

begin life over again, and to live as if the past had never been, has often been essayed, and the *scène à faire* of her confrontation, sooner or later, with the inexorable reality of things has been often and sometimes admirably composed; but no one has studied such a character at once more delicately and more closely than Mr. Pinero, or infused a larger element of truth and human nature into those crucial moments when the past rises from its grave.

Aubrey Tanqueray is a chivalrous English gentleman in what the author calls the "dangerous" age of the early forties. He has been married unhappily to a frigid, impeccable Englishwoman, who has apparently never appreciated, still less loved him; and there is one daughter, not far from twenty years old when the play begins. Her father has been a widower for some years, and he has no ties of any kind to bind him, as the daughter has made up her mind to take the veil in the Catholic convent where she had been brought up. Under these circumstances he falls

in love with a certain Paula, who had "kept house," as she herself puts it, with more than one man before him, and whose history, or the greater part of it, he knows. He asks her to marry him. There is the great postulate of the play, on which everything that follows depends. Is it possible? It is difficult to grant it, but these quiet, passionate men do strange things sometimes, and above all there is the fascination of the desire to "rehabilitate" a human creature and restore a human soul. At any rate the audience is willing to grant the postulate and to see what the dramatist will make of it. Above all, what will he make of the woman? Everything turns on that, and it is here that Mr. Pinero has done so admirably. Paula is above all things frank, and it is characteristic of her that she speaks of her underhand interception of two of her husband's letters as "the most caddish thing I ever did." She is also an inexorable little realist, who sees and states facts as they are. Even after her marriage there is something *canaille* about

her occasionally. The leopard does not change his spots at once. "What will my coachman say?" she asks when she visits Aubrey in his rooms in the Albany at eleven o'clock at night, when they are going to be married the next day, and nothing could be more underbred than the way in which—a capital touch excellently observed—she speaks of his servants. After marriage she is bored to death in the great country house, where no one comes to see her, and says so with perfect frankness. She is grossly rude to Mrs. Cortelyon, her husband's old friend and neighbour, when that lady finally plucks up courage to call upon her, and in spite of her husband's entreaties insists on asking Sir George Orreyed, a nincompoop who had married a *déclassée* like herself, and his wife, to stay with her. The effect which these people have upon her is excellently studied. She is not common in grain like Lady Orreyed; her husband has had a great influence over her, though she is unwilling to avow it; her stepdaughter Ellean (who has given up

the convent and come back to her father's home soon after the marriage) has a still greater; and she "lies awake at night, hating the Orreyeds." The relations between the poor woman and Ellean are particularly interesting, and it is probably true to nature that she should instinctively seek her own moral restoration through her love for this innocent girl rather than through the husband who passionately loves her. Unfortunately the girl has from the first an instinct that her step-mother is not as other good women, and repels the other's passionate advances. Moreover, just when there is a prospect of a reconciliation of the two over Ellean's happy engagement to Captain Ardale, it comes out that Paula and he had had too close relations not many years ago. The girl detects the miserable secret, and speaks plain and bitter words to Paula, who thus by an irony of fate is made the means of wrecking the happiness of the one human being to whom she is unselfishly devoted. It is true that Paula poisons herself, presumably with the idea of re-

moving the one obstacle to their union. The author does not clearly express his own conception at this point, but surely there can be no question of the conventional "happy ending." The obstacle remains exactly where it was. A girl can hardly marry a man who had had such relations with her stepmother.

This theme, handled with genuine courage, but also with moral insight and delicacy, is set forth in a vigorous close-packed style. The piece counts as literature, not, of course, because it is loaded with pseudo-literary padding—the ordinary British playwright's conception of a "literary" play—but because it has little or no such padding, because the dialogue is brief, pregnant, and in character, and because the *mot de la situation* is not wanting when needed. When Mrs. Cortelyon says that she and the first Mrs. Tanqueray were "cherries on one stalk," and when Ellean remarks to her father, "You can't take up this position towards me without affording me the fullest explanation," we tremble. That is quite

what the ambitious British playwright ordinarily means by "literature." But there were no other such phrases, and the dialogue in general, without being particularly witty, was admirably true and living. For instance, when Paula breaks away from Captain Ardale, who, with the natural conviction that his own troubles were more interesting than any one else's, was representing his own hard case to her and supplicating her to say nothing about the past, with an impatient "Oh, I wasn't considering you at all"—the fact being, of course, that she is wholly preoccupied with herself and Ellean—the English playgoer, who had half-expected to hear the sentimental balderdash usual on such occasions, can hardly believe his ears, and almost utters a "Bravo" under his breath.

The piece is played by the St. James's Company in full strength, with the scenery and accessories of the original London production. The interest of the performance centres, of course, in Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Paula. It is a character-

study of extraordinary fascination, and puts the actress into the front rank of her profession. It was as good in the charming little love scene between her and Aubrey in the first act as in the great scenes with Ellean and Captain Ardale. Her courage and frankness are admirably conveyed, and not less so the steps of the transformation by which she is gradually converted from a selfish woman, greedy for pleasure and excitement, into a loving and suffering one. Miss Maud Millett had a not very congenial part in Ellean. There were good moments in her final scene with Paula, but she was thoroughly unsympathetic to the audience, and that was a mistake. A certain maiden coldness, of course, is necessary in the character, but something more spiritual and poetical was wanted. At first she merely gave the impression of a self-engrossed schoolgirl. Miss Granville played Mrs. Cortelyon competently, as is her wont, and above all with the quiet air of good breeding essential to the part. Mr. George Alexander's over-intense manner, which is some-

times trying, was in place in the part of an *exalté* like Aubrey Tanqueray, and we have never seen him to better advantage. His breakdown in the final scene was truly moving. Mr. Ben Webster gave a gallant and taking figure to the slight yet difficult part of Captain Ardale, and the humorous relief of the piece was provided with excellent tact and taste by Mr. H. H. Vincent in the character of that most sympathetic and surely most innocent of worldlings, Cayley Drummle.

Oct. 24, 1893. W. T. A.

MR. AND MRS. CHARRINGTON (MISS JANET ACHURCH) IN "CANDIDA"

THE Gentlemen's Concert Hall, the scene of the Manchester Independent Theatre, is to disappear, and the Committee intimate that the performance of yesterday evening is likely to be the last they can promote. We hope that it is not so; that the mechanical or financial difficulty of finding a fit stage of operations will not be fatal; that the Manchester public will in future have the chance more than ever to encourage the presenting of plays that are for some reason unusual or adventurous; that the five pieces of Ibsen, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Love's Labour's Lost," and "Candida" will find some sequel; and that we may often see, under the same auspices, companies as precisely matched to the high calibre of the dramas chosen as that which enacted Mr. Bernard Shaw's play

last night. We have throughout tried to meet the aspirations of the Independent Theatre Committee with criticism as searching as they ought to desire. If we have not always concurred in the promoters' own estimate of the performances, we have written, whether our criticisms were just or not, in the wish to further dramatic art in the city. Last evening's presentation we can only wish to applaud and celebrate.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, who understands anything, would think it a high compliment to be compared to a Fool in Shakspere; but, as others might think it rude or unintelligible, we will not make the comparison. Inadmissible as much of Shakspere is to Mr. Shaw the critic, Mr. Shaw the dramatist is clearly and keenly alive to the supreme effect of putting wisdom on the lips and the flashlights of irony in the hand of the jester, trolling and fanfaronading like a child. The weekly humour and paradox of Mr. Shaw contain, we assure him, illuminations that made him eminent among dramatic judges. One character above all in "Candida" transfers something of

this mixed critical manner to a tragi-comic personage. Whether or no "The Idiot" of Dostoieffsky at all suggested the creation of Eugene Marjoribanks, does not matter. The conception of a childlike creature, a poet, a boy of eighteen, got up to look like Shelley, and not yet a man; femininely hectic and timid and fierce, the real chorus in the play and the final judge or searcher of hearts of his fellow-puppets—this conception is hazardous, but it prevailed and triumphed. Mr. Courtenay Thorpe need not have come on at first with a stiff and lackadaisical stare, and he sometimes overplayed. But he understood the part, and gradually the audience felt that he could not properly look otherwise if he would realize it. Mr. Thorpe's voice and intelligence are very good; he had to act the real hero of the play. The Rev. James Morell on the other hand is a philanthropic "Socialist" vicar, ever living up to his private picture of himself as melting a churchful of admirers with his eloquence. He is a variation on the Ibsen husband of the Helmer type. He arranges his household on

theories of "helpfulness" and fraternal service, which end in others doing most of the work for him. His curate, his typewriting lady secretary, and others are blindly in love with him. This is part of the system, though he does not see it. His wife is attached, but in a highly different way, which the play has to unfold. She returns from an absence, bringing the "boy" Eugene (who has been choked out of his miserable society home), apparently as a kind of fetching and carrying retainer. The first explosion comes when Eugene tells Morell something of what he, Morell, is; when he explains that he loves Morell's wife; that she is, mystically, "his," because he and not Morell can understand her; and that Morell, who begins to throttle him in the pauses of his own rhetoric, is "afraid of" him, Eugene. This is well; and Morell is enraged and half-shaken in his self-estimate. Mr. Charles Charrington has worked well with Mr. Shaw in making the character of Morell very complete and formidably hopeless. We have never seen so persuasive a figuring of a hollow soul, ready with

fresh and ever-fresh reserves of phrasing drawn up from its wells. The accent, posture, and amphitheatrical manner in the crises of private life were all masterly; so was the sincerity of his bewildered rage, and his bitter clinging to his position as apostle and master.

The only perplexity came at the end of the second act, when certain hopes were raised that Morell was after all, if by mere defensive egotism, to profit by the sight of his face as shown in the glass by Eugene, and even to turn the tables for a moment. But this would have been hardly consistent with the aim of the third and last act, which was to complete the portrait of Morell without mercy. Here was the opportunity of Candida. In a parade of marital confidence Morell had left her alone with Eugene for the evening while he went to make an oration. He comes back suddenly, and surprises Eugene with his head on Candida's knees. Eugene in his mystical manner explains the truth, that while barred by "a flaming sword" from vulgar advances, he had all the happiness he desired,

that of Candida's compassion, her comprehension of himself, her divine handling of his wounds, her goodness. All this part of the play was full of sallies and fitful side-intentions, that make it hard to follow when heard, and therefore untheatrical. Once, when a red-hot poker in some way served as a symbol of chaste separation, the point of the wild humour was only half apparent. The end, after various hesitations, approaches when the two men invite Candida to "choose between them." Here is the crucial part; the playwright has landed himself in a kind of stalemate. He gets out of it by a device that nearly reminds us of the remark made in the play, "How conventional you unconventional people are!" But it is convention at two removes. The obvious Adelphi plan would be for Candida to stick to her husband because she had promised in church to do so. The older romantic plan would be to assert her inner soul and go forth with the one man that can see into it, Eugene. One more double is requisite and sufficient for Mr. Shaw. Its sentimental and dubious character is concealed by

the ingenious conduct of the dialogue. She says, "I choose the weaker." Superficially this is the feckless boy and vagabond Eugene, and Morell, histrionic to the last, "accepts" her judgment. She then explains that the "weaker" is Morell himself, whom she sees as he really is, but still, in a sort of maternal compassion, adopts. Eugene has understood; he rushes forth, "the night is impatient" for him. She lets him go with a cruel text for him to remember, that she is fifteen years older than he, and that this difference will increase in meaning with time. "When we are a hundred years older we shall be the same age," is the substance of his last retort. Then Morell embraces her, and curtain descends.

This whole passage, as we have said, strikes us as sentiment wrapped up in ingenuities, and it is some strain on our belief that even Morell should welcome his reward with such rapture when receiving it, as the corollary of his weakness, from his direst critic, who has upset his whole theory of himself. Perhaps the playwright tugged impatiently at

his motley and intricate knot. It has to be said, however, that Miss Janet Achurch played the difficult and sometimes indistinct part of Candida very well and in the only possible spirit, that of a serene, *clairvoyante*, mistress of the whole position, disposing of a couple of children whose natures she explains to themselves and to each other. She has no passion for either, no commonplace conflict of love and duty. When they ask her to "choose," she asks them to "bid," as if in auction, what they can give her. She then makes her choice on the subtle principle described. Miss Achurch went through this piquant and abnormal situation with perfect naturalness and with an incisive deliverance of the points. A plainer and stronger part in a modern play of this type would be easily within her compass, and indeed has, by her performance of Ibsen's Nora, often been proved to be her forte.

The three leading personages were therefore very well played. So, in their degrees, were the others. Burgess, Candida's father, the North-country employer and honest, un-

conscious "scoundrel" of high standing (scoundrel in the eyes of the Socialist parson), was admirably acted by Mr. J. H. Atkinson, without any excess. Mr. H. T. Bagnall did quite well as a curate and Miss Edith Craig as a typewriter, and these were all the characters. "Candida" has been already played elsewhere in the provinces, though not often. It has yet to be heard in London, where it deserves no mean reception, especially if it is represented by the present company.

March 15, 1898. O. E.

MR. BEERBOHM TREE IN "TRILBY"

SATURDAY was one of the red-letter days in the history of the Theatre Royal—a new play for which all England was waiting, a first-rate performance, a great success, a thronged, excited, and fascinated house. In keeping such a *primeur* for Manchester, Mr. Tree has laid us all under an obligation, and the audience was evidently glad to be able to acknowledge it in its own way. The applause was most hearty and spontaneous, and the success absolutely unequivocal. In a little speech which he made at the close of the performance Mr. Tree referred lightly to the "great effort" which had been put forth by all concerned to be ready in time, and we can well believe it. But the piece went without hitch, and the rollicking festivity of the second act was carried through with the greatest finish as well as animation. It was a great

triumph for all concerned, primarily, of course, for Mr. Du Maurier, but also for Mr. Paul Potter, who dramatised the novel for the stage and whose appearance by the side of Mr. Tree at the close was not the least interesting event of a very interesting night, for Mr. Tree himself, for Miss Dorothea Baird, in whom he has found an almost ideal Trilby, and for a company in general excellently good.

"Trilby," after captivating all America, is fast captivating all England, and an adaptation of it stands, therefore, in a very special case. On the one hand, it is bound to suffer by comparison with the diffused *bonhomie* and quaint fantasy of the novel—qualities almost impossible to give upon the stage; but, on the other hand, a mere suggestion goes a long way when a great part of the audience have the whole book present to their minds, and prevents what would be mere melodrama in an ordinary form sounding merely melodramatic in "Trilby." Moreover, Mr. Du Maurier's novel was exceptional, in that he was able to possess his readers' imaginations

in two ways, and to put his personages before them with the pencil as well as with the pen. The reader thus knows Trilby and Svengali and Taffy and the rest of them as he knows his own friends and acquaintances, and his interest in seeing them move and hearing them speak may confidently be counted on beforehand. It is one of the rare cases where it is a positive advantage, instead of, as usual, a drawback, that there is a book behind the play. Of course, this would not apply if the play were a coarse travesty of the book and nothing else. But the surprise—to be frank—of Saturday was that it was a good deal more than that. The first act is really skilful, and keeps to a remarkable degree the easy familiar tone, the mingled realism and romance of the original. The personages were at once firmly planted on their feet, and the difficult process of giving, by way of dialogue only, the necessary retrospects and explanations which the author is able to give at length in his own person in the novel, was successfully performed. Much of the second act was also

good in the same way. It was only from the end of the second act onwards that the real or supposed demands of the stage victoriously asserted themselves, and that the piece dropped at times into ordinary melodrama. If after reading "Trilby" we ask what interests us, the answer will be anything but "the story." It is the loveableness of Trilby herself, the kind, brave manliness of her three friends, the gusto and humour of the book, the "realization of the day-dream" which, far more than "real life," is what so many of us want from art, and which Mr. Du Maurier here pre-eminently supplies. As for the story, one sees that there are two — (*a*) the "Dame aux Camélias" in another setting; and (*b*) a melodrama with hypnotism for its *motif*,—to be candid, what the French call a "tale of Mother Goose." Now the story in some form must—at all events till the stage has been a good deal further Ibsenised than it is at present—become the vital point as soon as there is any question of turning a book into a play. In this particular case the choice is only between *a* and *b*. Shall we lay

stress on this essentially tragic situation—that a woman, naturally good, has been guilty of grave lapses, is honourably loved and returns the affection, and is then called upon to sacrifice her happiness for her lover's sake, the irrevocable past coming up disastrously between him and her? There are two objections to that. One is that it is the classic situation of Dumas' famous play. Dumas by no means exhausts it, and some day it will be put on the stage again. But that will need courage. For the moment Dumas stands somewhat in the way. Also that situation means tragedy, psychology—all manner of great but difficult things. How much easier is *b*! Get the audience to grant to you this postulate —that a man can hypnotise a woman so as to give her a new self and cause her to forget her old one, and can make an unrivalled singer of her who could not sing, unhypnotised, a note in tune—and how easy everything becomes! Of course, there is a sacrifice. Tragedy becomes melodrama, and mere arbitrary wonder-working takes the place of the difficult, tiresome things which we

call psychology and literature and the development of character. But very few men in Mr. Potter's place would have done differently. Probably, as the stage now is, his resolute avoidance of *a* (an avoidance carried much further than it is by Mr. Du Maurier himself in the novel) and his resolute concentration of all the stress on *b*, was the necessary condition of success. Of course, that comes to the same thing as saying that the stage, as it now is, is an inferior form of art, and that the great masters would not have been thus content with the second best. Such considerations, however, are unpractical. Mr. Potter did not make the modern stage, and there is no suggestion of his being a great master. But he has the credit of having done a piece of journeyman's work in an uncommonly workmanlike manner, at least as well as, if not better than, any piece of work of the kind has been done of late years in England.

The play ends, as in the novel, with the death of Trilby, hastened apparently by the portrait of Svengali. The merely marvellous

"Mother Goose" element in the plot, which is present at this point even in the novel, is here disagreeably prominent. Why does Trilby die? Not because she loves Svengali—the play is clearer on that point than the novel. Is it because she cannot marry Billee? But that impossibility almost vanishes in the play, and the excision of half a dozen words would remove it altogether. But, then, is this abrupt tragic ending necessary? No moral necessity binds her to the dead Svengali, whom she does not love, and whose wife she has been in name only. But against a merely physical necessity —the man's hypnotic power over her brain—the mind of the spectator rebels, and rightly. The power of the dead man over her is merely repulsive and horrible, and would be felt at once to be so if we could conceive ourselves as taking it seriously. Happy endings are often inept because in defiance of the moral and logical necessities of the situation. But a happy ending in this case is possible and justifiable—granted, of course, the abandonment of the *a* motive, and the exclusive

stress that has been laid throughout on *b*—and we think that this last act, which even an excited and enthusiastic audience felt on Saturday to be disappointing, should be seriously re-considered.

Mr. Beerbohm Tree has found one of the great parts of his life—some, no doubt, will think it the greatest—in Svengali. He makes a very Mephistopheles of the part; indeed, it is clear that he would be a Mephistopheles of the first order. The facial play was masterly, and there were a short mirthless laugh and a kick-out of the leg behind for Gecko's benefit, when Svengali thought himself unusually clever, which were miracles of uncanny realism. Particularly interesting was the scene with Mrs. Bagot and the Rev. Dr. Bagot, in which the gesture of the hands by which it was conveyed that Trilby had sat for "the altogether" was half comic and wholly sinister—a very triumph of expressiveness. This deeply studied, picturesque, and always interesting piece of acting was, of course, one of the great features of the performance. Hardly less important a one, however, was

Miss Dorothea Baird's rendering of the part of Trilby. To have found such a Trilby is a piece of unheard-of good fortune. Miss Baird looks the part almost to perfection : she has precisely the charming smile which Mr. Du Maurier gives to Trilby ; and by some happy gift of nature or art, or both, she is able to play the part with the unhackneyed freshness and candour which it before all requires. It was a beautiful performance, with rare poetical qualities, and even the most hardened old playgoers could not watch it without a thrill of sympathy and pleasure. Mr. Edmund Maurice's Taffy was a little disappointing. He looked the man admirably, and some of his by-play was excellent, but he failed to convey distinction, and Taffy is excellently distinguished. Mr. Patrick Evans will make more of Billee with further experience ; at present he has the *physique* and all the gallant, youthful bearing of the part. Mr. Lionel Brough made the Laird a little too farcical, and his Scotch was a little too middle-class ; but it was a strongly individualised and humorous per-

formance. Mr. Herbert Ross's Zouzou was a first-rate sketch—nature itself in the second act, where he has taken rather more than is good for him, and not less in the third act, where his desperate, good-natured hurry in emergencies and his little French ejaculations under his breath were excessively diverting. Mr. Charles Allan delighted the audience with a wonderfully exact, but good-natured and unexaggerated, reproduction of the parsonical manner, and Miss Annie Hughes was a fair Madame Vinard, though why she should talk broken English throughout was not apparent. Is that the only way in which it can be brought home to an English audience that a personage is French?

Sept. 9, 1895. W. T. A.

MR. AND MRS. KENDAL IN "THE GREATEST OF THESE"

Mr. and Mrs. Kendal made their first appearance in Manchester after their return from the United States last night, and were well received at the Theatre Royal by a good house, though not exactly with the warmth of intimate acquaintance and regard which used to characterize their relations with Manchester audiences not many years ago. We suppose the reason is that Manchester has of late seen less of them. A theatrical generation is short-lived, and soon forgets even its best friends and favourites if they are not constantly before its eye. But perhaps also her Manchester audiences identified Mrs. Kendal so exclusively with good, managing women of the type she rendered so pleasantly familiar in plays like "Still Waters Run Deep," or "A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing," that they were a little puzzled and estranged by Mrs. Kendal as a lady

with a past, in pieces reminiscent of the French. However, Manchester is always glad to see Mr. and Mrs. Kendal in whatever shape—even if the shape be "questionable"—they may present themselves, and we do not doubt that their very finished performances of the two chief parts in Mr. Grundy's play will attract large audiences.

At the same time "The Greatest of These" is by no means a good play, though, as is natural with Mr. Grundy, a good deal more brightly and smartly written than the average. Its psychology is trivial and its ethics downright perverse. Shelley said in his half-humorous, half-serious way of the "School for Scandal": "I see the object of this comedy. It is to associate goodness and kindness with drinking, and villany with books." So in "The Greatest of These" the good people break the Ten Commandments freely, while those who keep them are hypocrites or callous egotists. A very juvenile, Rousseau-ish opposition of "duty" and "Nature" constantly recurs—as if the philosophers meant by living "according to Nature"

living according to the elementary, often anti-social and inhuman instincts of the flesh. Mrs. Armitage is a sympathetic and charming person who committed adultery while she had three young children living. Laurence Armitage is a gallant young fellow who forges his friend's signature to an accommodation bill. These facts are a little too solid, and the audience rebels somewhat when it is asked to give all its sympathy to the wife and son and none to the straight-living pharisaical father. It is quite true that a man may live straight and not have the root of the matter in him ; but it is not true —and it is of immoral tendency to represent it as true—that all virtuous people are hypocrites and egotists. There should have been a foil to Mr. Armitage—a virtuous person who is also amiable,—but the odious minister, Mr. Dormer, is worse than his patron. The devil really has too much the best of it. We have not the slightest sympathy with the mock prudery that would banish from the stage all serious treatment of one great side of life. But it is not serious treatment of it to repre-

sent Mrs. Armitage's proceedings of ten years ago as a mere venial lapse, quite consistent with her remaining a happy wife and happy mother, and respected by all who knew her, and with a "day at home" for the *élite* of Warminster. The French have a logic of their own in these things, and think that a *grande passion* justifies everything. But then they have the wit to see that a *grande passion* of that kind necessarily ends in a grand smash, and that it is not permissible to make the best of both worlds, which is what Mrs. Armitage substantially does.

The plot of the piece will have been to some extent gathered from what has been said. The piece essentially consists in the special pleading for the publican against the Pharisee. But in all plays a transformation or development of some kind is essential, and no sooner are these two types of character confronted than one perceives that the whole effort of the author must be to bring about and render plausible a change of mind on the part of the Pharisee. This is done partly by bringing matters to a crisis between

husband and wife. When he has actually ordered her out of the house he begins to realize what it will be to lose her for ever. But it is also partly due to the accidental revelation of his old rival's magnanimity, most of all to the gradual breaking down of his conscience under his wife's reproaches and the letters of his dead daughter. And so he opens his arms to his family, becomes amiable as well as virtuous, and when the curtain falls they are all apparently destined to be happy ever afterwards.

This false and perverse play—for such, with all its cleverness, we must take leave to think it—would be hissed off the stage if it were in less skilful hands than those of Mr. and Mrs. Kendal. The latter does all that can be done to make Mrs. Armitage plausible as well as attractive, and the latter, though repellent, takes care not to let himself become odious beyond redemption or forgiveness. There was here a very subtle shade to be observed, and most actors would have gone too far and made the part Pecksniffian. Mr. J. F. Graham was amusing as the

Rev. Mr. Dormer; but what would the author be at? Is the man a repulsive hypocrite pure and simple? Or a well-meaning man at bottom, only blinded by self-satisfaction and hidebound in convention? It is difficult to make out, and consequently the actor's portrait was not so finely drawn as it might have been. Miss Nellie Campbell's Grace Armitage, Mr. Rodney Edgcumbe's Laurence, and Mr. Frank Atherley's Philip Curzon were meritorious, though not remarkable performances.

Sept. 24, 1895. W. T. A.

THE END.

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